

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 Dickenson 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 Dickenson County. Many of you were closely involved with the project on a regular basis, and much of the information included is well known. At the same time we thought it was important to provide background material along with a detailed description of how the project unfolded and decisions were made, for those learning about it for the first time.

We wish to again acknowledge the matching funds of \$6,000 provided to us by the Dickenson Board of Supervisors which helped to make Dickenson 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 Dickenson County Electronic Village <http://www.dcev.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, 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 Phyllis Deel about including Dickenson County in the TOP project. Phyllis brought this opportunity to the attention of Dickenson County government officials who expressed a strong interest in the project and pledged the \$6,000 required. A copy of the commitment letter from Dickenson County is located in Appendix A.

Dickenson County leaders informed of the project at this time included:

- Keith Viers—County Administrator
- Mark Cvetnich—911 Coordinator
- Wayne Newberry—Interim county school district contact
- Paul Buchanan—Chair, County Board of Supervisors
- Charlotte Mullins—Executive Director, Dickenson Industrial Development Authority
- Nathan Smith—Liaison for youth, senior at Clintwood High School

In Fall 2001 Virginia Tech was notified that the grant was funded with the start date of October 1, 2001.

Extension Agent Training

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

A second training took place on November 12, 2002 at the Virginia Tech Center in Richmond. Mathew 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 Larowe explained the CSPP model to be used in evaluating current technology access and equipment in each county. (It was decided at a later time that John Nichols with Network Infrastructure and Services at Virginia Tech would carry out this

assessment.) Finally, agents discussed the applications of community networks that could be helpful in their particular communities.

Forming a Technology Leadership Team

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

Efforts to Recruit a Technology Leadership Team

Extension Agent Phyllis Deel used several methods to recruit a TLT that would represent all geographic and occupational sectors of Dickenson County. A letter explaining the TOP project and inviting the recipient to an organizational meeting on July 18, 2003 was mailed to 17 county leaders. (A copy of this letter along with a list of the recipients can be found in Appendix B.) Several days prior to the meeting, an article announcing the program and the opportunity to join the TLT was published in the local newspaper.

Seventeen people attended this meeting held on July 18, 2003 at the Dickenson County Extension Office in Clintwood. After a welcome and introductions by Extension Agent Phyllis Deel, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson reviewed the goals and future activities of the TOP project.

County Visioning Process: Kathryn Young, a research associate with the Institute for Policy Research at Virginia Tech, described the action plan that grew out of the Dickenson County Visioning Process completed some months earlier. This community planning forum was funded by a grant of \$10,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission and led by students and faculty from the Center for Public Administration and Policy at Virginia Tech. The four County priorities identified through that process included quality of life, education, infrastructure, and tourism. The group discussed how this community planning process related to the *Take Charge* process found in the TOP plan. They decided that the strategy for seeking citizen input using small work groups was similar to that applied in the *Take Charge* process, and both focus on economic development and community well-being. They recommended that the completed visioning process be used in place of *Take Charge* and the priorities developed guide the TOP program.

Web site development: TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone moved the group through an Introduction to Community Networks and described the steps that would be necessary to set up the web site. The group began to develop a list of headings for the web site including:

- About Dickenson County
- Dickenson County Culture
- Village Mall
- Community Groups
- Calendar and Government
- Community Projects
- Tourism
- Education
- Health
- Resources
- Services

A list of the members joining the TLT at this meeting along with those added later in the project can be found in Appendix B.

IDENTIFYING COUNTY ISSUES AND SETTING GOALS

After review and discussion by Extension Agent Phyllis Deel and the Project Management Team, it was agreed that the Discussion Guide arising from the Dickenson County Visioning Process would fulfill the issues identification step of the TOP plan. The goal of the community planning forum led by the Virginia Tech Center for Public Administration and Policy was to develop a vision based on how the community sees itself and the practical possibilities of its future. County residents participated in an issue framing process based on the approach of public deliberation. Consultants from Virginia Tech interviewed twelve people in Dickenson County to get a sense of the perceived opportunities and weaknesses of the county. Those contacts were asked to recommend others who should be included in the issue framing and deliberative dialogue. About 40 citizens and leaders agreed to participate in a structured visioning process.

Visioning Session I

The first meeting was held on March 24, 2003 at the Jettie Baker Center in Clintwood. The goal was “to engage and express the ranges of concerns and hopes Dickenson leaders and citizens have for the future of the county.” Participants were provided with an overview of the project, the tasks to be performed, and a timeline, and then divided into three groups. The groups were provided with a set of photos taken inside the county along with demographic information. Each group developed a caption for each picture that described the thought or feeling invoked by that picture. Once complete, the group members discussed the photos and demographic data they had been given. Comments collected from this discussion were assembled based on their relatedness to four questions. The questions and examples of responses appear below:

As you think about your community, what makes you feel concerned, fearful, worried...?

- “Concerned about poverty and unemployment”
- “Need industry that will stay in Dickenson County”
- “A lot of places are eyesores with trash and abandoned vehicles”
- “Not enough major employers”

As you think about your community, what makes you feel proud, happy, hopeful...?

- “Very low crime rate”
- “No 4-lane highways or interstates”
- “Proud of Haysi clinic”
- “The leadership is promoting positive change”

If you had a magic wand, what would you change?

- “Concerned about the empty buildings and loss of jobs”
- “Concerned about having so many people on welfare”
- “Concerned about pollution protection laws not being enforced (e.g., littering)”
- “Would like to see abandoned buildings condemned and torn down”

If you had a magic wand, what would you protect?

- “Historic resources/revitalization”
- “Protect the natural resources”
- “Protect the history and traditions of the county”
- “Ralph Stanley/Mountain Music heritage”

Visioning Session II

The second meeting was held on April 7, 2003 at the Haysi High School library. The goal was “to group comments and name approaches to encountering the future.” Participants reviewed the photos, photo captions, and comments from the first meeting, and then added concerns, fears, hopes, and opportunities to those comments. Small groups discussed how the comments might be clustered into general approaches for improving the future of Dickenson. These citizen committees identified education, job creation, tourism, and quality of life as the four approaches for future discussion.

Two more meetings followed, as the committees developed narrative paragraphs to define their approaches and identified first-step action items.

Dickenson County’s four approaches for deliberating public policy were compiled into a Discussion Booklet to serve as a guide for the future. A copy of the Discussion Booklet can be found in Appendix C of this document.

A summary of the four approaches and action items follows
:

Approach 1: Concentrate on Quality of Life Improvement

This approach argues that community leaders and citizens can shape the best future for the county by working together to expand appropriate infrastructure and cultivate amenities. Current citizens will benefit, population will be retained, and the county will become more attractive to outside business and industry as the county continues to improve the general quality of life for citizens of the county.

Some things that could be done:

- Secure and reopen Dickenson County Medical Center.
- Build on strengths, including low crime and low taxes.
- Improve infrastructure that will foster and support growth, including water, sewer, broadband, and transportation.
- Aggressively pursue outside funding for infrastructure improvements.
- Attract good family restaurants, hotels, and motels.
- Clean up rivers.
- Build a community center with a cinema.

- Establish an organization to address community-specific issues that the Chamber of Commerce cannot.
- Promote volunteerism and involve churches.
- Involve youth—they are the future and they have energy.

Approach 2: Concentrate on Education

This approach argues that any discussion of the future must begin with a focus on education. Opportunities for youth must improve and the county should work to make sure that its primary and secondary educational opportunities are second to none. In addition, the county should promote diverse educational opportunities for its adult citizens.

Some things that could be done:

- Persuade colleges in the area to hold adult education classes in the county.
- Seek to attract our own small college or satellite branch.
- Focus on attracting and retaining quality teachers.
- Harness more energy of adults—encourage a more active PTA.
- Get youth involved in the conversation—give them a voice and tap their energy to find new solutions.
- Perform a fresh evaluation of existing programs.
- Secure funding to renovate flats in Clinchoco for arts/crafts education center.
- Increase sensitivity to the needs of disadvantaged preschool children.

Approach 3: Concentrate on Job Creation

This approach seeks to improve the quality of life and economic conditions by directly confronting the number and types of employment opportunities available in the county.

Some things that could be done:

- Lobby to make sure funding continues for the Coalfields Expressway.
- Connect the Chamber of Commerce with industry.
- Support DCWIN in conjunction with e-business; promote local e-business.
- Train local business owners and citizens to use e-business resources.
- Support existing businesses and a “grow your own” approach to economic development.
- Foster a climate where businesses work together and help each other.
- Start a “shop at home” campaign.
- Focus on building adequate water and sewer infrastructure for businesses and industry.

Approach 4: Concentrate on Promoting Tourism and Natural Heritage

This approach argues that Dickenson should focus on protecting and expanding its natural beauty and cultural heritage to foster economic development through tourism and to enhance the quality of life for all its citizens.

Some things that could be done:

- Construct a comprehensive tourism plan, including development needs and marketing strategies.
- Revisit the TVA tourism study.
- Identify under-utilized resources.
- Coordinate tourism efforts throughout the region.
- Support the creation and marketing of a heritage musical trail.
- Put together thematic tour packages to be run by the Chamber of Commerce (e.g. historical tours, hiking tours).
- Attract businesses that support tourism (i.e., restaurants and hotels).
- Cultivate more tourism products.
- Build a sky rope on the gorge.
- Continue the clean-up campaign.

DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF THE WEB SITE

Beginning in Fall, 2003 the Dickenson County TLT began to meet regularly and move ahead in preparing their web site for public launch. The minutes of these meetings summarize the issues discussed, the decisions made, and community partnerships put in place.

Technology Leadership Team - September 11, 2003 – Dickenson County 911 Office, Clintwood

Present: 7 TLT members, VCE Agent Phyllis Deel, VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson

Web site content: TLT members were reminded that all TOP sites would be deployed on October 1, 2003, so content was needed prior to that date.

The following members volunteered to handle these sections:

- Organizations, churches – Kim Carroll
- Businesses – Rita Surratt
- Tourism – Jane Moore
- About Dickenson County – Gayle Stanley
- Education – Jeannie Mullins

Web site name: The web site needs a name, possibly there could be a contest to choose a name.

Cost for a web page: Web sites for small businesses with five or fewer employees and nonprofit organizations will be provided at no charge by BEV until June 2005.

Technology Leadership Team - September 24, 2003 – Dickenson County 911 Office, Clintwood

TOP sponsors: Extension Agent Phyllis Deel answered questions about what organization is overseeing the TOP project - it is a joint project of Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Blacksburg Electronic Village and is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce. Another question was who would pay for any ads about the project? Phyllis responded that Extension had a good relationship with the local newspaper and any publicity for the project could probably be handled as a newspaper article with no cost.

Responsibilities of the web administrators: TLT members had questions about how the administrative team would work. Their responsibilities will include approving villagers, businesses, and organizations for posting on the directories, approving and adding events to the Community Calendar, and moderating discussion on the community forum.

Selection of domain name: TLT member Kim Carroll checked on the availability of the domain names dcev.net and dickenson.net. The group chose dcev.net.

Computer access for students: The group expressed a great interest in being part of a program to ensure every student in the county had a computer in his or her home. They decided that in the future they would look for grants or other funds to make that happen. In thinking about numbers, the group wondered if there had ever been a survey to get a feel for how many homes had computers. They will check with Mark Cvetnich with DCWIN.

DCWIN announcement: As many TLT members as possible should go to the “wire-cutting” ceremony for DCWIN to be held on October 13, 2003 at 10:00 am in the Jettie Baker Center in Clintwood.

Technology Leadership Team - October 9, 2003 – Dickenson County 911 Office, Clintwood

Present: 11 TLT members, VCE Agent Phyllis Deel, TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone, Blacksburg Electronic Village Staff Member Robert Roberts

TLT Training: Jaime Shetrone and Robert Roberts demonstrated the operation of the on-line Discussion Forum. Some important points were:

- The TLT must decide how the administrative team will handle adding postings to the Community Calendar, approve people as Villagers, and approve listings for the directories; folks can be added directly by the system and then approved by the administrator or go through the approval process first and be added by the administrator.
- Mark Cvetnich will set up a TLT administration account to handle and distribute incoming e-mails.
- The TLT needs to establish guidelines as to who can be approved as a villager.
- The TLT needs to establish guidelines for the Discussion Board and write a disclaimer.
- The TLT needs to set topic boundaries for the Discussion Board.
- The TLT must decide when to have the public announcement of their site.
- The TLT must think about marketing – to whom will the dcev.net be directed?

Selection of site administrators: Danny Mullins, Gayle Stanley, and Kim Carroll will be the volunteer administrators for dcev.net. Administrators are still needed for the following sections:

- People
- Forum
- Moderate the forum
- Calendar
- Registrar for business and community groups

Technology Leadership Team - February 12, 2004 – Dickenson County 911 Office – 11:00 am

Present: 6 TLT members, VCE Agent Phyllis Deel, TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone

Tasks remaining: Jaime Shetrone led the group through a summary of what had been completed and what still needed to be decided:

- Administration – is a refresher on access procedure needed?
- Web administrators – TLT members Kim Carroll, Gayle Stanley, and Danny Mullins have agreed to serve as site administrators - who has what responsibility?
- Calendar – TLT member Vincent Fanelli
- Moderate the forum – Kim Carroll and Gayle Stanley
- Review of dates that the U.S. Dept of Commerce has set for grant completion
- Staff support - Jaime's funding on the project will end on June 30
- Review and update of project goals and dates

Technology Leadership Team - February 26, 2004 – Dickenson County 911 Office, Clintwood

Present: 8 TLT members, VCE Agent Phyllis Deel, VCE Community Initiatives Specialist Pamela Gibson

Program evaluation: The first item of business was an evaluation of the project conducted by Pamela Gibson. TLT members who were not at this meeting will be asked to send their comments about the accomplishments and limitations of the project to Jaime Shetrone.

Web site administration:

The TLT needs to recruit businesses for the business directory – what are the selling points?

- Small businesses with no more than 5 employees can qualify for a web site, 2 e-mail accounts, and space to enter a mailing list at no charge
- A registrar must be found for the business directory; TLT members Kim Carroll and Gayle Stanley volunteered
- The application to register as a villager or business or nonprofit organization is at dcev.net/bbox/apps

Technology Leadership Team - April 14, 2004 – Dickenson County 911 Office, Clintwood

Present: 6 TLT members, VCE Agent Phyllis Deel

Finalizing the launch of www.dcev.net:

The public launch is scheduled for April 28, 2004 and will occur in three phases:

- Phase 1 – a newspaper article is being developed describing the launch and telling folks how to sign up for the directories (April 28th)

- Phase 2 – a public announcement and promotion will take place at the Business Appreciation Dinner of the Chamber of Commerce on May 23, 2004. Kim Carroll will make a presentation, prepare rack cards for distribution, and have a computer there for sign-ups
- Phase 3 – a promotional booth describing the site will be set up at the community July 4th celebration

COMMUNITY READINESS WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

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

Training For the Technology Leadership Team

Early in the project training was offered to the local TLT with the expectation that the members would share what they learned with the organizations or communities they represented. At the first meeting of the newly formed TLT on July 18, 2003 TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone presented an Introduction to Community Networks. BEV Staff Member Robert Roberts visited the TLT on October 8, 2003 to train the group on use of the Discussion Forum and Community Calendar and the responsibilities of the volunteer administrators. Jaime Shetrone traveled to Dickenson County on February 12, 2004 to review the BEV in a Box features and the administration that would be required. On March 3, 2004 Kim Carroll and Gayle Stanley received transition training that prepared them to assume full responsibility for the management of the site directories and content.

Training for the Community

The Dickenson TLT participated in several information sessions for the public and for various civic clubs to make residents aware of the features and benefits of the Dickenson County Electronic Village.

Dickenson County Wireless Network Ceremony

On October 13, 2003 the Dickenson County Wireless Integrated Network (DCWIN) held a “wire-cutting” ceremony. This announced the beginning of high-speed internet access in Dickenson County.

Presentations to Civic Clubs

Between January and March, 2004 Gayle Stanley, Phyllis Deel, and Rita Surratt made presentations to several civic groups in Dickenson County, describing the web site and encouraging members to register for the various directories. They visited the Haysi Kiwanis Club, the McClure Kiwanis Club, the Clintwood Kiwanis Club, and the Dickenson Lions Club.

Public Launch of the Web Site

The Dickenson County TLT officially launched the Dickenson County Electronic Village on April 28, 2004.

(Dickenson County did not choose to schedule a workshop describing the Virtual Business Incubator and Community Connections programs.)

MARKETING AND PUBLICITY EFFORTS

The following newspaper articles about the TOP project were published in Dickenson County. The rack card was placed in visible areas throughout the county including stores, post offices, and government buildings. Copies of the newspaper articles and the rack card are located in Appendix D.

Powers, Rena; “Extension office seeks members for technology leadership team,” *The Dickenson Star*; July 16, 2003.

Powers, Rena; “Technology team studies approaches to e-village project,” *The Dickenson Star*; August 6, 2003.

Powers, Rena; “E-village project moving forward,” *The Dickenson Star*; April 28, 2004.

Dickenson County Electronic Village: A “rack card” developed by TLT member Kim Carroll outlines what the Dickenson County Electronic Village is, how to become a villager, and how to list your business on the Village Mall.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

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

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

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

Thoughts from the TLT

To learn more about the local reaction to the project and its limitations and accomplishments, Pamela Gibson, VCE Community Initiatives Specialist, met with the TLT on February 26, 2004. The questions she asked and responses she received are given below. TLT members who did not attend this meeting were given the opportunity to e-mail their comments to Jaime Shetrone.

What are your general impressions of the project?

Exciting. We are looking forward to the launch of the Community Connections and Virtual Business Incubator programs.

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

The process provided wide attendance. Key decision-makers were present. There was a diverse group in attendance. The process incorporated issues used on the web site.

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

The system works well, and it can be integrated with other web sites. We have had the desire to do this but the TOP project gives us the opportunity, and provides the autonomy and the space to hold the web sites.

The project holds the potential to break boundaries for small communities. The village can open lines of communication within the community and to the outside world. It makes you less egocentric by seeing what other groups are doing. It provides a great scheduling tool.

The challenge is to make it a habit and branch off into other things.

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

Technology was identified as an issue. Other issues were incorporated into the site.

What were some of the things that went well?

There was good food!

We were able to keep the people with technical skills involved. The less technically-savvy folks became alienated and dropped out.

What were some things that didn't go well?

We should have marketed the process as a community activity and not just a high tech venture. We should have explained that one didn't have to be technically literate to be involved. We have

found that we need the community supporters to keep the interest and to provide information. Timing of events wasn't good—it was difficult to keep things going over the holidays.

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

Getting the web site launched. Also, finding a volunteer who wasn't high-tech to take over the calendar. He reached beyond his comfort zone and learned how to do it. He is a great proponent for senior citizens.

We have been able to show the potential of this project and to sell the concept.

What would you do differently?

We would have kept more non-technical folks involved. We should have had assignments for the low-tech folks, such as marketing, calendar, and business research, etc. We should have involved the youth because they have already developed internet skills. It would have helped to survey the community about technical issues.

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

The project has gotten people involved who normally wouldn't have. There is less fear of technology. Decision-makers are seeing the benefit. The average citizens are learning the value of technology. The county is evolving.

What collaboration has resulted from this project?

We collaborated with DCWIN. DCWIN was an already existing entity. They laid the groundwork for the success of the TOP project. They are willing to provide a good place to meet and provide the infrastructure. The Board of Supervisors has been willing to match funds.

Additional comments

Additional comments were provided by Dickenson County TLT members by answering the following questions via e-mail. The opportunity to respond by e-mail was provided to all TLT members to give those who did not attend the meeting on February 26, 2004 a chance to give their feedback.

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

"We already have several e-business villages that serve this region, but this is the only community site that Dickenson County has. I think that it is great for community organizations, etc. to have the opportunity to be villagers."

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

“We got started late due to many changes in extension and other supporting organizations. The project had a lot of competition for the agent's time from already existing projects. Our project could have used more structure in meeting organization. Also, we have some great ‘techies’, but we needed more ‘worker bee’ types.”

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

“Have more regularly scheduled meetings and try to involve more stakeholders.”

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?

“The site is positioned to help a lot of small businesses.

The project has brought out of the ‘closet’ some wonderful technology orientated people, one who has actually set up an official business, hired a person to help her with web services , and looking at hiring more people.

The technology assessment piece is badly needed by Dickenson County for planning purposes, as well as, seeking funding for further development of the DCWIN Wireless project

The TLT has a shared vision to put computers in all of the homes of students that do not have them. Connections with an agency that annually culls and discards some of their computers can actually make this possible.”

Participation in the Dickenson County Electronic Village

VISITS TO THE DICKENSON COUNTY ELECTRONIC VILLAGE SITE

(Data compiled August 1, 2004)

Month	Total Visits	Unique Visitors	Calendar Visits	Village Mall Visits	Organization Directory Visits
10/2003	2	18	2	6	3
11/2003	23	9	1	15	15
12/2003	18	4	2	15	15
1/2004	14	3	1	8	5
2/2004	35	16	10	17	15
3/2004	31	18	8	9	9
4/2004	199	69	21	85	56
5/2004	285	135	26	117	88
6/2004	900	189	10	412	407
7/2004	355	146	33	134	82
Grand Totals	1885	606	114	1090	694

LISTINGS ON THE DICKENSON COUNTY ELECTRONIC VILLAGE DIRECTORIES

(Data compiled August 1, 2004)

Total Villagers	Total Businesses	Total Organizations
36	18	9

VIRTUAL BUSINESS INCUBATOR AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS ACCOUNTS

(Data compiled August 1, 2004)

Virtual Business Incubator	Community Connections
1	0

EVENTS AND MEETINGS POSTED ON THE COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Civic Organizations (recurring)

Technology Leadership Team Meeting
Remote Area Medical Services

Other

Chat Time
10 Chicken Run
Annual Flanagan Boat Races
Marks' Burning at the Stake
E-Village Presentation

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Various circumstances caused delays with the Dickenson County project; however, when the TLT was formed, the site developed rapidly. The public launch took place on April 28, 2004 and since that time the TLT has taken advantage of several community events to market the site to residents, businesses, and civic groups in Dickenson. Visits to the Dickenson County Electronic Village and to the Village Mall, in particular, continue to grow. The unique accomplishments of the program in Dickenson County are described below.

- A strength of the project in Dickenson was the discovery of some very talented residents with strong technical expertise who have anchored their TLT. Others with limited technology backgrounds have made an effort to move beyond their former boundaries to assume positions of responsibility with the site. Early in the project, the TLT discussed the potential mentoring of local residents in web page development and that may still be a possibility. The technical support provided by these volunteers ensures the continued availability of competent web site administrators..
- The TLT has forged a working relationship with the DCWIN project which now provides high speed Internet access to all areas in Dickenson County. The availability of high speed access is critical to the growth of the Dickenson County Electronic Village, and cooperation between these two groups will benefit both.
- A team effort of the TLT and the Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce brought the attention of the business community to the Dickenson County Electronic Village. A TLT member was invited to make a presentation describing dcev.net and the business opportunities that it provided at the Chamber's Annual Business Appreciation Dinner in May, 2004. A computer was available on site so that those attending the dinner could sign up as Villagers or add their enterprise to the Business Directory.
- Attractive "rack cards" designed by the TLT have been distributed to area businesses and other high traffic locations within the County. This attractive and cost-effective marketing tool may also attract the attention of visitors or others passing through the County.
- The Dickenson County Electronic Village has unlimited potential to support tourism in Dickenson, a major opportunity for economic growth in the County. At this time there are 18 businesses posted on the Business Directory, although only one business registered for the Virtual Business Incubator. At the same time there have been nearly 1,100 visits to the web site Business Directory. As more and more tourists plan both day trips and extended vacations using the Internet as a guide, family owned businesses providing services or special attractions that invite visitors need to become visible. Crafts and local products representing the Appalachian culture are of interest to Internet shoppers in Virginia and worldwide, and the potential for local businesses to increase sales is enormous.
- Visits to the Dickenson County Electronic Village surged to 900 in June 2004, likely related to the publicity received at the Chamber of Commerce Business Appreciation Dinner and through the rack cards. In fact about half of the total visits to the site (1,885) occurred in

June. There have been 606 unique visitors since the site was deployed in October 2003, and 470 or about 75% of these visited since the public launch in April 2004. At this time 36 Dickenson residents are registered as villagers and nine nonprofit organizations are registered on the Community Organization Directory.\. Several community events and the regular meetings of the Remote Medical Services have been posted on the new Community Calendar.

- An on-going problem for the program in Dickenson County is the large number of residents who do not have access to a computer at home or elsewhere. Since the first meeting, the TLT has developed a shared vision as to how they might make computers available to children and youth who at this time do not have a computer at home. A program to recycle computers that are being replaced by individuals or businesses or government agencies is being organized, and could place computers into many homes that have been without. Grant opportunities might also provide resources to make computers available to more folks in Dickenson.
- A virtual launch of the Dickenson County Electronic Village sponsored by the TLT, DCWIN, Dickenson Chamber of Commerce, and other representatives with local business interests including the Department of Business Assistance confirmed the potential of technology for business and education. The major speaker at this event held in Clintwood was William Sanders, the Director of the Blacksburg Electronic Village, who spoke from his office in Blacksburg, and described the contributions of a community web site to economic development.
- One goal of the TOP program was the identification of resources within the community that could spur the creation of small businesses and add jobs to the local economy. One such enterprise is a web services business that has flourished with the heightened awareness of the need for businesses of all sizes to have a web site to market their products or services. This web service has provided a job for the web master and occasional part time work for an additional person. This outcome is a perfect example of what this project hoped to accomplish.
- This project has also brought intangible rewards to individuals and communities in Dickenson County. In the words of one TLT member, “the project holds the potential to break boundaries for small communities. The village can open lines of communication within the community and to the outside world. It makes you less egocentric by seeing what other groups are doing.”

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The Dickenson TLT will continue to partner with the DCWIN program to support Internet access and web site development. A program to recycle computers discarded by businesses or other groups to provide home computers for youth in the Dickenson School District is in the planning stage. The Technology Assessment and Master Plan developed by John Nichols should prove helpful as the county continues to address technology needs.

LESSONS LEARNED

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

Conduct a Situation Analysis

Identifying competing projects

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

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

Focusing on counties rather than individual communities

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

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

Ensuring availability of sufficient volunteers

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

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

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

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

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

Seeking an enthusiastic leader

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

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

Arranging for training facilities

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

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

Plans for Project Implementation

Conducting *Take Charge*

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

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

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

Recruiting a Technology Leadership Team

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

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

Attracting volunteers both with and without technical skills

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

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

Scheduling meeting times

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

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

Estimating time commitment

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

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

Setting web site policies and procedures

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

Examples of questions forwarded to the BEV team included:

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

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

Appendix A – Project Implementation Materials

Contents:

- Services Provided to the TOP Counties by the Blacksburg Electronic Village
- TOP Implementation Plan
- Letter of commitment from Dickenson County Board of Supervisors

SERVICES PROVIDED TO THE TOP COUNTIES BY THE BLACKSBURG ELECTRONIC VILLAGE

BEV IN A BOX

Community Web Site Hosting

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

Community Web Site Design

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

Community Village Mall (Business Directory)

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

Online Community Directory

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

Online Community Calendar

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

Online Discussion Forum

The BEV provided a complete online forum system for use by community and civic groups and local government. Online conference systems make it easy to talk about and organize community

projects and initiatives, to hold town meetings about important issues, or just to help people meet and learn about their neighbors.

Community Connections (Community Group Web Sites)

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

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

Groups receiving a Community Connections account get:

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

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

Virtual Business Incubator

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

Groups receiving a Virtual Business Incubator account get:

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

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

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

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

Goal

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

Counties

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

Key Outcomes

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

Implementation Task List

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

c. **Introduction to community networks**

Extension agents will learn how community networks make local communities more effective in solving problems, engaging citizens in local issues and creating a stronger sense of community.

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

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

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

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

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

3. **Identify Local Technology Leadership Teams**

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

These teams will perform the following functions:

0. Serve as the core group for planning and implementing the Take Charge program that will reach out to the entire community. In their capacity as the planning committee for the Take Charge process, they will undertake the preparatory tasks needed to facilitate this process successfully within their communities. These tasks are listed in [Appendix B: Getting Ready for the Take Charge Process](#)
1. Advise and coordinate local program planning and to communicate and advocate the process to all segments of the community.

2. Work with project staff and Virginia Tech faculty to perform an assessment of current technology in the community using the CSPP model and other instruments.
3. Serve as facilitators in community workshops and forums to enhance the understanding of the general public on the potential of technology.
4. Work with project staff to identify and secure the resources necessary to fulfill and sustain the strategies of the local plan.
5. Remain in place after the end of the TOP funding with a commitment to continuing to provide technology leadership in the county.

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

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

- Private residents that have shown interest in economic growth
- Senior Citizens groups

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

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

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

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

Agents will email the TOP Coordinator (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 Dickenson Board of Supervisors

KEITH L. VIERS
County Administrator
Telephone: 540/926-1676
Fax: 540/926-1649



Dickenson County Board of Supervisors

P. O. Box 1098
CLINTWOOD, VIRGINIA 24228

March 3, 2001

PAUL D. BUCHANAN, Chairman
Clintwood District

BRIAN O'QUINN-Vice-Chairman
Sandlick District

SCOTT MOORE
Ervinton District

SCOTT STANLEY
Willis District

CARL SKEENS
Kenady District

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

Dear Dr. Cohill:

On behalf of the Dickenson County Board of Supervisors, we are very pleased to be selected as a county to be included in the TOP proposal, GETTING RURAL VIRGINIA CONNECTED: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE, and offer our support in any way that we can.

As an isolated, rural county we feel a large part of our future lies in becoming a "wired community," being connected to the rest of the world as well as to each other. With the resources that this grant will provide, if funded, it will provide the assistance for community organization and leadership development and the technical assistance through Virginia Cooperative Extension to put our county plan in place to accomplish this goal.

We will be in support of assembling a local team to provide guidance and leadership for the program, as well as a commitment of \$2,000 annually for three years to provide a match for the grant, and a commitment to create a local process to handle long term sustainability of the project.

As a county distressed by chronic unemployment and poverty, we feel that technology can provide much support to help us help ourselves, and we urge the funding of this proposal.

Sincerely,


Keith Viers
Dickenson County Administrator

Appendix B – Recruitment and Composition of the Technology Leadership Team

Contents:

- Invitation letter to join the Dickenson Technology Leadership Team
- List of individuals who received an invitation letter
- List of members of the Dickenson County Technology Leadership Team

Letter of Invitation

Dickenson County Office
P. O. Box 1160
Clintwood, VA 24228-1160
276/926-4605 FAX: 276/926-4614
E-mail: phdeel@vt.edu

TO: Potential Technology Leadership Team Members

FROM: Phyllis Deel, Extension Agent FCS

RE: **Technology Leadership Team Meeting**
12:00 Noon, July 18, 2003
Dickenson County Extension Office

You are being invited by The Dickenson County Office of Virginia Cooperative Extension to be a part of the initial Technology Leadership Team for the project, "*Connecting Rural Virginia*." The meeting will take place at 12 noon, beginning with lunch, on July 18, 2003 at the Extension Office in Clintwood, Virginia with other TLT participants, technology area agents, extension agents and other VA Tech faculty.

This is the initial meeting of a USDA funded project, "*Connecting Rural Virginia*," being conducted by Virginia Cooperative Extension in partnership with Blacksburg Electronic Village and additional support from the Dickenson County Board of Supervisors. The goal will be to help build a stronger civic, social, and business community through education and the use of technology through the building of an electronic village.

The project will be enhanced by access to the Internet by the new DC WIN system under implementation by the County Administration. Also, the ARC funded leadership building and county visioning process that has just been implemented will be an advantage to getting grass-roots involvement in the *Connecting Rural Virginia* project.

Please let us know if you will be able to attend this initial Technology Leadership Team meeting by calling the Extension Office at (276) 926-4605, or e-mail phdeel@vt.edu. by **noon on Thursday, July 17, 2003**.

We hope that you can attend this meeting on this very exciting project for Dickenson County.

People who received letters of invitation to initial TLT meeting on July 18, 2003

Name	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
Charlotte Mullins	Clintwood	Executive Director, Dickenson County Industrial Development Authority
Donald Baker	Clintwood	Mayor, Town of Clintwood
Donnie Rife	Clintwood	
Doris Rife	Clintwood	Volunteer Director, Jettie Baker Center
Gayle Stanley	Clintwood	Creator of Dickenson County's "unofficial" web site
Jane Moore	Haysi	
Jim O'Quinn	Haysi	Project Manager, Coalfield Economic Development Authority
Joe Sluss	Clintwood	Minister
John Stanley	Clintwood	Vice-chair, Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce, business owner
Keena Hays	Clintwood	Student
Keith Viers	Clintwood	County Administrator, Dickenson County
Kim Carroll	Clintwood	Food product entrepreneur, Appalachian Gardens
Mark Cvetnich	Clintwood	911 Coordinator, Dickenson County
Mary Hylton	Clintwood	
Nathan Smith	Clintwood	Liaison for youth, senior at Clintwood High School
Norman Mullins	Haysi	Mayor, Town of Haysi
Paul Buchanan	Clintwood	Chair, Dickenson County Board of Supervisors
Paula Davis	Clintwood	Editor, Dickenson Star
Rebecca Stanley	Clintwood	
Rita Surratt	Clintwood	Business owner
Ronnie Robbins	Clintwood	Commissioner of Revenue, Dickenson County
Wayne Newberry	Clintwood	Teacher, Interim County School District Contact

Members of the Dickenson County Technology Leadership Team

Member	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
Charlotte Mullins	Clintwood	Executive Directory, Dickenson County Industrial Development Authority
Danny Mullins	Clintwood	
Gayle Stanley	Clintwood	Creator of Dickenson County's "unofficial" web site
Jane Moore	Clintwood	Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce, owner of Mountain Art Works restaurant
Jeannie Mullins	Clintwood	Virginia Cooperative Extension
Jeremy Mullins	Clintwood	Dickenson County 911
John Clay Stanley	Clintwood	Vice Chair, Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce, business owner
Keith L. Viers	Clintwood	County Administrator, Dickenson County
Kim Carroll	Clintwood	Food product entrepreneur, Appalachian Gardens
Mark Cvetnich	Clintwood	Coordinator, Dickenson County 911
Nathan Smith	Clintwood	Liaison for youth, senior at Clintwood High School
Paul D. Buchanan	Clintwood	Chair, Dickenson County Board of Supervisors
Phyllis Deel	Clintwood	Agent, Dickenson County Extension Office
Rebecca Stanley	Clintwood	Student
Rena Powers	Clintwood	Dickenson Star
Rita Surratt	Clintwood	Business owner
Ronnie L. Robbins	Clintwood	
Vincent Fanelli	McClure	Retired

Appendix C – Dickenson County Discussion Guide

Dickenson County Discussion Guide

A Vision for the Future

Contents

<i>About this Discussion Guide</i>	<u>1</u>
<i>Approach 1: Concentrate on Quality of Life Improvement</i>	<u>2</u>
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<i>Approach 3: Concentrate on Job Creation</i>	<u>7</u>
<i>Approach 4: Concentrate on Promoting Tourism and Natural Heritage</i>	<u>9</u>

About this Discussion Guide

The purpose of the book is to help you and your fellow citizens deliberate about the future vision of Dickenson County and to share ideas about improving the quality of life and economic development in the county.

Several citizens and government leaders in the county have spent many weeks working with a team from Virginia Tech to prepare. Your conversation today will be use to craft a vision statement for the future of the county and will contribute to the construction of a very concrete two-year action plan, which will be supported by technical assistance from the Virginia Tech team to prepare grants which will support the vision and the plan.

The goal of the booklet and today's conversation is **not** to choose one of these approaches. You will probably see things in each of them that you fine attractive and things that you find troubling. Deliberation is a structured process that allows you and your fellow citizens to share your ideas, your experiences, and your perspectives, while recognizing the complexity of the problems and their potential solutions that are a part of your community experience.

Deliberation is **not** debate. It is **not** public relations. It is **not** political horse-trading. It is about citizens talking and listening with each other to find new approaches and shared values that can shape a brighter future. While it does not end in total agreement, it "Can point people in a particular direction and give

them a foundation for sharable or interconnected purposes" (David Matthews, President, Kettering Foundation).

Each approach contains a general direction and set of ideas that have been expressed by citizens in your county, however, this booklet is by no means an exhaustive document. You are encouraged to share your experience and your ideas whether they match what is in this booklet or not. You are encouraged to read through as much of the booklet as you can and refer to it frequently during the deliberative process.



Approach 1: Concentrate on Quality of Life Improvement

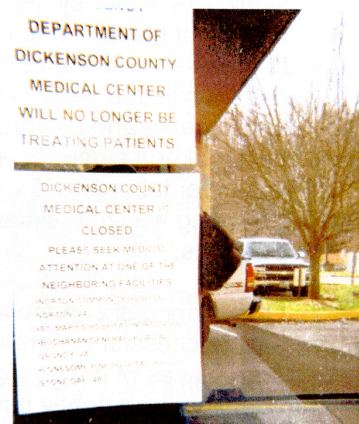
This approach argues that community leaders and citizens can shape the best future for the county by working together to expand appropriate infrastructure and cultivate amenities. Current citizens will benefit, population will be retained, and the county will become more attractive to outside business and industry as the county continues to improve the general quality of life for citizens of the county.

The county and its towns can be proud of the successes they have had with recent initiatives to improve services and amenities for county citizens. The town of Clintwood now hosts the Jetty Baker Center, a wonderful facility, which seats 360 and was designed to support cultural arts and educational activities. The town of Haysi will see a phase 1 of a 2.5 million dollar medical clinic complete in the fall. It will offer citizens access to general health care as well as specialists, dental care, and behavioral health. When the clinic is fully complete, leaders hope it will house a drugstore, 200 person community center, daycare, and assisted living facility.



Projects like DCWIN, the county's high speed wireless internet initiative, and the groundbreaking for the 1.6 million day care facility highlight the tremendous momentum for quality of life improvements throughout the county. However, numerous concerns remain. County leaders are baffled by the persistence of illegal dumping and the pervasiveness of litter. The Dickenson County Medical Facility closed in December, leaving many citizens without adequate healthcare option.

The county's IDA board is in the process of trying to purchase the hospital and restore service as soon as possible. At this time, the future of the facility is still uncertain.



While there has been progress with water and sewer projects, development must continue. Some sidewalks and streetscapes are in sore need of repair. Many abandoned buildings require renovation or should be torn down. Shopping, entertainment, and recreational activities for youth and families are severely limited inside the county.

In order to continue and expand the momentum to improve the quality of life inside the county, citizens and leaders must cooperate and

coordinate efforts to foster community pride and ownership. They must also support formal and informal avenues toward growing infrastructure and amenities.

The Heartland Center for Leadership Development publishes a book called Twenty Clues to Rural Community Survival. Both adequate infrastructure and community pride appear among the twenty clues. Speaking about infrastructure, the authors assert that "thriving rural communities understand

the importance of physical infrastructures – such as streets, sidewalks, water systems, sewage treatment plants – and efforts are made to maintain and improve them. In these communities, a clean-up day includes public parks and playgrounds, business owners keep sidewalks repaired, and volunteer labor and donated materials go a long way to maintaining public buildings.”¹

Of evidence of community pride they say “successful communities are often showplaces of community care and attention, with neatly trimmed yards, public gardens, and well-kept public parks. But pride also shows up in other ways especially in community festivals and events that give residents a chance to celebrate their community, its history and heritage.”²

Some Things That Could Be Done:

- Secure and reopen Dickenson County Medial Center.
- Build on strengths, including: low crime and low taxes.
- Improve infrastructure that will foster and support growth, including water, sewer, broadband, and transportation.
- Aggressively pursue outside funding for infrastructure improvements.
- Attract good family restaurants, hotels, and motels.
- Clean up rivers.
- Build a community center with a cinema.
- Establish an organization to address community-specific issues that the Chamber cannot.
- Promote volunteerism/Involve churches.

¹ Luther, Vicki and Wall, Milan. Clues to Rural Community Survival. 1998. Heartland Center for Leadership Development: Lincoln, Nebraska.

² ibid

- Involve youth – they are the future and they have energy

Some Supporters of This Approach Say:

- This approach is the foundation stone – the success of other approaches follows successful treatment of quality of life issues.
- This approach is realistic, achievable, and will show results more immediately.
- We want to take pride in our community.
- Federal funding is available for infrastructure development and beautification – the area definitely meets the economic distress criteria (TEA21, etc).

Some Challenges to this Approach Are:

- Real success requires broad participation throughout the county – often there is a lack of participation.
- Dramatic improvement will require huge investments – funding is always a problem.
- If we are seeking to build a better future, education must be top priority, we do not want to dilute resources for educational improvement.

Some Trade Offs of Pursuing This Approach:

- Supporters would seek to involve the whole community in quality of life improvements, even if we had to mount an intense campaign to convince people to contribute time and/or money.
- Supporters would seek to improve basic quality of life, as a community, even if we have to reconsider or change the way we organize the use of our time and resources.
- Supporters would accept some regulations (e.g. zoning) to improve quality of life.

Approach 2: Concentrate on Education

This approach argues

that any discussion of the future must begin with a focus on education. Opportunities for youth must improve and the county should work to make sure that its primary and secondary educational opportunities are second to none. In addition, the county should promote diverse educational opportunities for its adult citizens.

In order to grow its youth and enhance their futures, the county must concentrate its energies and resources on making sure the primary and secondary educational programs have the tools for excellence. While



consider the abilities of its citizens to use technology. Many citizens require training or retraining

to be a part of the new, high-skilled workforce the county hopes to cultivate. Further, as the county strives to preserve its rich cultural arts heritage it may want to consider offering educational programs, formally or informally, that support this preservation.

Citizens have relatively easy access to programs at two community colleges, Mountain Empire in neighboring Wise County and Southwest Virginia Community College in Tazewell County, as well as the nearby University of Virginia at Wise. However, campaigns aimed at information about and recruitment for educational programs need to be strengthened throughout the county. In addition, the county may want to consider addressing other barriers to access, such as transportation or childcare, for some of its citizens. Citizens and leaders also report a desire to have a branch of an institution of higher learning located within the county. The county may want to direct efforts at creating such a partnership.

Dickenson County Schools Current Accreditation Status	
CLINCHCO ELEM.	Provisionally Accredited/Needs Improvement
CLINTWOOD ELEM.	Provisionally Accredited/Meets State Standards
ERVINTON ELEM.	Provisionally Accredited/Needs Improvement
LONGS FORK ELEM.	Fully Accredited
SANDLICK ELEM.	Provisionally Accredited/Meets State Standards
CLINTWOOD HIGH	Provisionally Accredited/Meets State Standards
ERVINTON HIGH	Accredited with Warning in: Mathematics
HAYSI HIGH	Provisionally Accredited/Meets State Standards

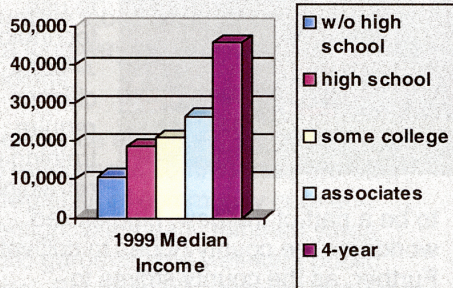
complying with Standards Of Learning (SOLs) and accreditation status are concerns, program areas from technology to the arts are also important to promoting the kind of well-rounded citizens the county hopes to produce.

Adult education is also important. As the county strives to enhance its technological capabilities, it must also

The Heartland Center ranks Strong Belief in and Support of Education among their 20 Clues to Rural

Educational Access is Vital

Data from the 1999 census clearly shows a positive relationship between median income and educational attainment. Average earnings for college graduates are more than 40% higher than those of high school graduates.



Community Survival. They report that “good schools are a point of pride as well as a stable employment force, and rural community leaders are very much aware of their school’s importance. However, this characteristic goes beyond the K-12 system to include an approach to life-long learning that puts education at the center of many community activities. Whether adult education is targeted at skills and job performance or hobbies and recreation, the successful community makes the most of education at all levels.”³

Some Things That Could Be Done:

- Persuade colleges in the area to hold adult education classes in the county.
- Seek to attract our own small college or satellite branch.
- Focus on attracting and retaining quality teachers.
- Harness more energy of adults – encourage a more active PTA.
- Get youth involved in the conversation – give them a voice and tap their energy to find new solutions.
- Perform a fresh evaluation of existing programs.

³ ibid

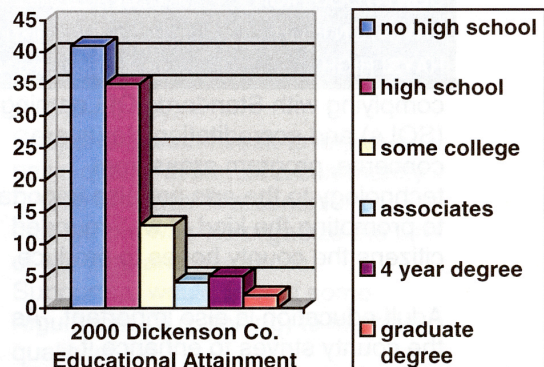
- Secure funding to renovate flats in Clinchco for arts/crafts education center.
- Increase sensitivity to the needs of disadvantaged preschool children.

Some Supporters of This Approach Say:

- There is a direct correlation between education standards and the economic climate and quality of life.
- Improving the quality of the educational enterprise will attract more outside business and residents
- Quality of education is at the center of economic growth – as quality educational programs grow, so does everything else.
- Nothing is more important to economic growth and an improved quality of life than producing and supporting a well-educated population.

Some Challenges to this Approach Are:

- Significant change would require more funds and time than we have.
- Improving K-12 education will not result in an immediate improvement to the economic climate.
- There is a lack of existing facilities within the county for new programs at any level.



Some Trade Offs of Pursuing This Approach:

- Supporters of this approach would emphasize improving the educational system even if it required additional tax revenues.
- Supporters would seek to improve the educational system, even if it did not produce an immediate change in the economic climate of the county.
- Supporters would focus on improving education for the county's youth, even if there is no guarantee that those youth will stay after graduation.

Approach 3: Concentrate on Job Creation

This approach seeks to improve the quality of life and economic conditions by directly confronting the number and types of employment opportunities available in the county.

This approach questions how any other programs can have the continuous support necessary until the majority of citizens have good, stable employment and are able to contribute wholly to the economy of the county. Concerns about high unemployment and low median income in the county prompt citizens and leaders to seek good, diverse jobs and industry that will come and stay in Dickenson County. The county has had success cultivating its relationship with Travelocity, but needs to focus on both industrial and commercial development in order to attract new major employers. In addition, downtown revitalization, broadband access, and programs to support small business play a major role in creating a broad tax base and diverse economy.

Citizens and leaders report concerns about lack of transportation access and its effect on economic development. They are hopeful and optimistic about the promise of the Coal Fields Expressway, but recognize that all kinds of improvements to the transportation system are necessary to support a strong economic development campaign. In addition, the fledgling Chamber of Commerce needs support and energy from all around the community to grow strong and achieve its commercial development goals.

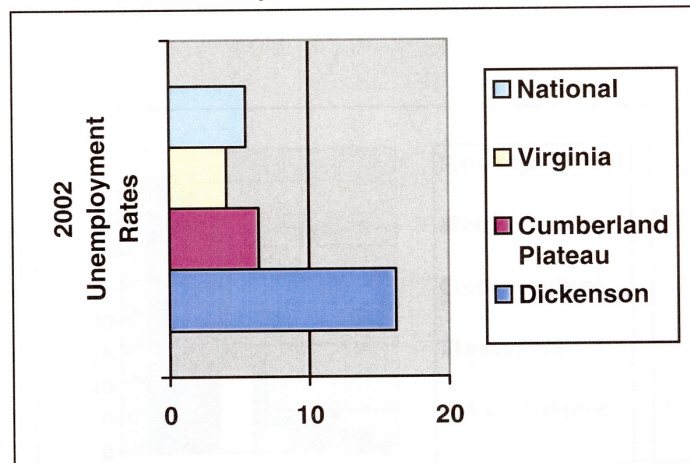
One of Heartland Center's 20 clues points to an active economic

development program. They say "an organized and active approach to economic development is common in successful communities. This type of approach depends on public and private sector resources working hand in

hand. Private economic development corporations are common, either as a subcommittee or an outgrowth of Chamber of Commerce or commercial club. However, it is clear that the most successful towns emphasize retaining and expanding existing businesses as well as trying to develop new business. This is a 'gardening not hunting' model of economic development⁴."

Some Things That Could Be Done:

- Lobby to make sure funding continues for the Coalfields Expressway.
- Connect the Chamber of Commerce with Industry.



⁴ ibid

- Support DCWIN in conjunction with e-business. Promote local e-business.
- Train local business owners and citizens to use e-business resources.
- Support existing businesses and a “grow your own” approach to economic development.
- Foster a climate where business work together and help each other.
- Start a “shop at home” campaign.
- Focus on building adequate water and sewer infrastructure for businesses and industry.

Some Supporters of This Approach Say:

- Focus on job creation will decrease the unemployment rate and bring more revenue into the community.
- A thriving business community will entice more people to stay and invest in the community.
- People cannot stay here if they cannot earn a living, no matter how great a place it is to live.
- More young people will stay if there are opportunities for them to work.
- More business, industry, and population brings more amenities and improves the quality of life.
- Increasing the tax base provides more revenue to support education.

Some Challenges to this Approach Are:

- The lack of good transportation infrastructure makes it difficult to support existing and attract new businesses.
- Social infrastructure like restaurants, hospitals, arts, and recreation need significant attention before the county can be attractive to new businesses.
- At lot of citizens have a status-quo, no growth mentality.

Some Trade Offs of Pursuing This Approach:

- Supporters of this approach would concentrate on job creation even if it means major change.
- Supporters would seek to grow business and industry throughout the county even if it growth changes the rural culture.
- Supporters of this approach would seek to attract new business and build new infrastructure for business and industry even if means sacrificing some scenic beauty.

Approach 4: Concentrate on Promoting Tourism and Natural Heritage

This approach argues that Dickenson should focus on its protecting and expanding its natural beauty and cultural heritage to foster economic development through tourism and to enhance the quality of life for all of its citizens.

“Virginia’s Baby” is a comfortable home for its citizens and a potential rustic haven for weary urban tourists. With its low cost of living, a low crime rate, and strong moral culture it is a nice place to raise a family and a nice place to retire. The County’s musical heritage, the Jetty Baker Center and Ralph Stanley museum, and beautiful scenic views make it an alluring attraction to visitors.

Many citizens of the county make a conscious choice to live there because of the special qualities provided by scenic beauty and local culture. Initiatives to improve the quality of life in the county should begin with the existing assets and sources of pride for the community.

As home to Breaks Interstate Park and John Flannagan Lake, Dickenson has an abundance of existing and potential outdoor activities to develop and promote. Rural communities are increasingly investigating ecotourism as a clean, viable industry that leaves the natural beauty and cultural heritage intact for county citizens. Tourism as an industry creates additional service industry employment in restaurants and hotels. Activities and recreation cultivated for their economic benefits



also enhance the quality of life for citizens of the county. Dickenson County citizen

s recognize the inherent beauty around them. In addition to seeking to preserve it for themselves and their children, they acknowledge their natural and cultural resources as a strong asset for promoting a brighter economic future.

Heartland Center lists knowledge of the physical environment among their 20 clues. They write that “importance of location is underscored continuously in local decision-making, as business and civic leaders picture their community in relations to others. Beyond location, however, communities must also be familiar with what they have locally. For example, the issue of preservation and protection of natural resources must be balanced with development options. Communities that manage this balance have a long-term approach to both environmental preservation and economic development.”⁵

Some Things That Could Be Done:

- Construct a comprehensive tourism plan, including development needs and marketing strategies.
- Revisit the TVA tourism study.
- Identify under-utilized resources.

⁵ ibid.

- Coordinate tourism efforts throughout the region.
- Support the creation and marketing of a heritage musical trail (PDC current project).
- Put together thematic tour packages to be run by the Chamber of Commerce (e.g. historical tours, hiking tours).
- Attract businesses that support tourism (i.e. restaurants and hotels).
- Cultivate more tourism products.
- Build a sky rope on the gorge.
- Continue the clean-up campaign.

Some Supporters of This Approach Say:

- More information about recreation, attractions, and local history would enrich the lives of current citizens.
- This approach is a natural fit with the resources we have.
- Could be done in pieces but results would begin to show immediately.
- Coordinated attractions and recreation would make the county more attractive for economic development.
- This approach provides some new jobs and better quality of life without destroying natural beauty.

Some Challenges to this Approach Are:

- This approach does not address the problem of youth leaving.
- Tourism is not a panacea – jobs are often low income, part-time, and seasonal – what we really need is good, stable employment with benefits.
- Promoting tourism has the potential to create problems of overcrowding and overuse of natural attractions by non-citizens.
- Access and mobility is a problem – road improvements are required before tourist stops can become more widely attractive to people outside the region.

Some Trade Offs of Pursuing This Approach:

- Supporters of this approach would seek to promote tourism and cultural heritage even if it means lots of people coming in from outside.
- Supports would promote the county as a tourist haven even if tourists bring more crime, more traffic, and greater environmental impacts into the county.
- Supports would seek to grow tourism as an industry even if the jobs are lower-paying and seasonal.

Appendix D – Marketing and Publicity Materials

Contents:

- Powers, Rena; “Extension office seeks members for technology leadership team;” *The Dickenson Star*; July 16, 2003.
- Powers, Rena; “Technology team studies approaches to e-village project;” *The Dickenson Star*; August 6, 2003.
- Powers, Rena; “E-village project moving forward;” *The Dickenson Star*; April 28, 2004.
- Dickenson County Electronic Village: A “rack card” developed by TLT member Kim Carroll outlines what the Dickenson County Electronic Village is, how to become a villager, and how to list your business on the Village Mall.

The Dickenson Star, July 16, 2003

Extension office seeks members for technology leadership team

Project will help develop electronic village for county

By RENA POWERS

Staff Writer

CLINTWOOD — How could an electronic village benefit Dickenson County and what would be the best way to design the project?

Those are among questions a technology leadership team will try to answer as they begin working on plans for a new electronic village in the county. An electronic village would tie businesses, government agencies and residents to the World Wide Web with broad band width speed.

Some of the team's members are expected to be selected Friday at a noon startup meeting for the project, dubbed "Connecting Rural Virginia." The project's aim is to build a stronger civic, social and business community through education and the use of technology.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce, the project is being conducted by Virginia Cooperative Extension in partnership with Blacksburg Electronic Village. The Dickenson County Board of Supervisors is also providing support for the project.

According to extension agent Phyllis Deel, Dickenson County was one of six communities selected to participate in the project. The technology team is being organized to determine existing technology needs and to receive input for the design of an electronic village for the entire county.

The Dickenson County Wireless Integrated Network project continues to move forward, Deel noted. DCWIN is a county project that will use towers to provide high-speed wireless Internet access to local residents. The project will allow area residents to have easy access to Internet service.

Deel said the goal is to begin developing a leadership team Friday that decide the best use for the electronic village project.

"The folks I have invited are some of the leadership and new grass roots folks who will have knowledge about the technology or they will have insight into how to best utilize an electronic village," said Deel.

"They could foresee everything from a calendar with different civic clubs. They would contribute a list of events too so everyone would know what is going on," she added. The community would be able to use the village as a source of information for community events.

"For example, when you don't get to listen to *In Memorium* on the radio or read the obituaries in the paper, you could find the information on the web," Deel said.

"One of the uses could be keeping up with Little League schedules, civil events and of course, there are many other uses. It would open the area to modern technology and new businesses and established businesses could benefit from it," she said.

Those who have questions about the project or would like to attend the technology leadership team meeting, should call Deel at the extension office, 276-926-4605, or e-mail her at phdeel@vt.edu.

E-mail writer at
rpowers@coalfield.com.

The Dickenson Star, August 6, 2003

Technology team studies approaches to e-village project

By RENA POWERS
Staff Writer

CLINTWOOD — A small group of local business owners and government leaders want to improve quality of life for their neighbors and spark economic development through the use of technology.

And they believe the creation of an electronic village is a way to do that. The project would tie businesses, government agencies and residents to the World Wide Web with broad band width speed.

The e-village would include the entire county and connect it with other counties, states and even countries. The project will allow county residents to interact through technology.

So, instead of crossing a street to buy, sell, trade, seek information or socialize, the community will be able to do those things via high-speed Internet service.

Many people believe that kind of technology will break down barriers that now stand in the county's way of economic development, such as the lack of a four-lane highway in the county.

The e-village proposal is part of "Getting Rural Virginia Connected," a larger project being conducted by Virginia Cooperative Extension in partnership with Blacksburg Electronic Village.

Dickenson County is one of nine localities in the state selected to be a part of the project, which is being funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Dickenson County Board of Supervisors is also providing support for the project.

About 15 people attended a July 18 startup meeting to determine how the county would benefit from an e-village and to form a technology leadership team that will oversee the project.

Jon Johnson, an area specialist with Virginia Tech's Technology Opportunity Program, conducted the meeting.

Johnson said the aim of the project is to expand the community's ability to use technology and to use it effectively. He explained that the program provides tools to help the community become a more vibrant and desirable place to live.

Expanding technology-based opportunities is one way to grow and to do that, he noted. Through use of the World Wide Web, local small business can gain recognition and increase sales.

He noted that several county agencies and businesses have web pages on the Internet that are "certainly worthwhile." However, he believes the creation of an electronic village can benefit the entire community. The village will be "like a community park where everybody can have some input about how it is going to look and really take ownership."

"Certainly, it will be unbiased, objective, non-commercial, citizen designed and volunteer led," Johnson added.

The group divided into groups and studied four different approaches to the project. Johnson asked the group to study the proposals and make recommendations on which is should be pursued.

The group will decide how to proceed at their next meeting. However, Johnson noted that, no matter what approach is selected, the project cannot be a success without the participation of the entire county.

THE APPROACHES

■ **Approach One: Quality of Life** — The goal of this option is to use technology to improve quality of life for county citizens.

Several recent improvements are evident in the community and the county has many assets, Johnson pointed out.

There's the Jettie Baker Center, a state-of-the-art facility designed to support cultural arts and educational activities, and the first phase of a \$2.5 million medical clinic in Haysi is expected to be complete in the fall.

Dickenson County Wireless Integrated Network, the county's high-speed wireless Internet project, is now up and running, and new day care center is under construction.

Plus, numerous water and sewer projects have been completed and many other projects are in the works.

So there's a long list of accomplishments. However, the first approach argues that other improvements would continue adding to the quality of life in the county.

Shopping, entertainment and recreation facilities are desperately needed in the county, and other projects could help build community pride and ownership. Those improvements might encourage outsiders to locate technology-based business here.

■ **Approach Two: Education** — This option focuses on improving education in the community.

When considering locating to an area, industries look at its education systems and the skills its residents possess, Johnson noted.

Economic growth is encouraged by a well-educated population, so primary and secondary educational opportunities for our youth should be a priority. Adult education is important as well.

When technological capabilities are enhanced, the abilities of the residents will also be enhanced.

■ **Approach Three: Infrastructure** — The goal of this option is to develop infrastructure with the aim of boosting economic development, attracting industry and creating jobs.

The county's lack of a four-lane highway limits access to it. Constructing a four-lane highway, like the proposed Coalfields Expressway, and other infrastructure would help attract new industry.

Johnson said a focus on industrial and commercial development to attract new major employers is needed. He said another important factor in this option will be to find a way to connect the chamber of commerce to industry and help the organization get the word out about Dickenson County's resources.

■ **Approach Four: Tourism** — This option focuses on highlighting the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage with the goal of boosting tourism and fostering economic development.

Breaks Interstate Park and John Flannagan Lake have numerous existing outdoor recreational activities, Johnson noted, and many more possibilities need to be explored.

With increased tourism, additional service industry employment will be needed. New restaurants and hotels would require additional staff positions, and outside dollars would come to the county. The addition of new business would also help improve the tax base.

For more information about the technology leadership project, contact Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent Phyllis Deel at 276-926-4605.

*E-mail writer at
rpowers@coalfield.com.*

The Dickenson Star, April 28, 2004

E-village project moving forward

By RENA POWERS
Staff Writer

CLINTWOOD — Dickenson County will soon launch a new electronic village through a partnership between Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Blacksburg Electronic Village.

Dickenson County has been chosen to participate in the "Connecting Rural Virginia" and will be among six localities in the state to establish an electronic village. The localities were chosen because they are rural counties, fairly isolated and in need of economic help.

Funded through a grant from the Department of Commerce, the local project began last summer when a technology leadership team was chosen.

The team was tasked with determining how an electronic village could tie businesses, government agencies and residents to the World Wide Web with broad band width speed. Responsibilities were delegated to determine needs and how the project should be designed.

Now the project is moving forward and the village should be up and running within two months.

"We have just begun to build the electronic village," said extension agent Phyllis Deel, who heads the local project.

The Dickenson County electronic village is a business incubator and county businesses will have the opportunity to list and link their web site to the e-village site. "What sets it apart from other electronic villages that colleges are offering is it is a community electronic village," she noted.

It will also benefit folks in the community. Organizations will be able to list their web sites on the e-village site and it will also include a calendar of events section. "We are hoping to provide a place where people can go to get the major calendar of events throughout the county on a regular basis," Deel said.

The site will also include a link where those interested in participating can register as a "villager." After completing an on-line user form, villagers will receive an e-mail from the site giving them a code. The code will enable them to go on the site and place their information there. Someone will be designated to keep the information updated, noted Deel.

The site will also have a community forum. "There are already some forums in the county, but this one will be well monitored and will be another place for sharing information," Deel said.

Through June 2005, the service will be free. "At some point after that, there may be a small fee for a listing but we hope to keep everything as small as possible," she noted.

Those who are already connected to the electronic community understand that electronic information goes all over the world and will take advantage of this service. Those who are not connected can also take advantage of the opportunity by listing their service on the site, she said.

Deel hopes the e-village will benefit local businesses. "We want to help new businesses who cannot afford to have their own electronic means right now to expand and grow," Deel said.

She said once community members post information on the web site, it will be possible to click on different links that will take you to web sites of businesses, churches and organizations located in the county.

While users will not be able to sell items on the e-village web site, they can establish a link to their own web site.

Deel said leadership team members will be contacting local businesses, civic groups and other organizations to schedule presentations about the project.

"No business is too big or too small to be listed. We hope to encourage those who don't have a web site to get a small site soon. For those who may want to put up their own web site, a workshop will be held in the near future.

For more information, contact Deel at 926-4605.

E-mail writer at
rpowers@coalfield.com.

Rack Card

Dickenson County Electronic Village

www.dcev.net

Who are the people of DCEV?

Any Dickenson County resident can be a villager!

What is a village mall?

*A showcase of local businesses
Free Advertising!*

What other groups can list information?

Community groups, churches, and organizations

What other information can I find at dcev.net?

A calendar of events, cultural information, and links to other valuable resources

How do we build an on-line community?

*Register as a villager and encourage friends and family to join you! **THEN...***

Remember to...

*- list your business, church, organization
- add events to the calendar
- join a discussion
- even check the weather!*

We hope you will join us at [dcev.net!](http://dcev.net)

Please use the following instructions to become a Villager and list your business in the directory. Feel free to use the informative "help" section at dcev.net.

To Become a Villager:

- Go to www.dcev.net.
- Click on the "People" link on the left hand side of the page.
- Click on the "Become a Villager" link.
- Fill in the required fields and select register.

Within 24 hours of registering, an administrator will make you an active Villager and you will receive a confirmation email. This will allow you to list your business, group or organization.

To List a Business:

- Go to www.dcev.net.
- Click on the "People" link on the left hand side of the page.
- Click on the "Log-in" button. You will be prompted for your user id and password.
- Once signed into the user account, click on "Add Your Group to the Directory" or "Add Your Business to the Directory" depending on which service is needed.
- Fill in the required fields and press "Add Group" or "Add Business Listing" depending on the services selected.

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

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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 a 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.