

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

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

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Blacksburg Electronic Village

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GETTING STARTED

Securing County Support

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

Extension Agent Training

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

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

Forming a Technology Leadership Team

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

began to move forward, it became obvious that all geographic areas of a county had to work together to support technology infrastructure and economic development, and all would be better served if there was one TLT providing leadership for the county. Ensuring broad representation from all areas of the county was a priority in recruiting TLT members.

Initial Efforts to Recruit a Technology Leadership Team

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

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

Establishing a Technology Leadership Team for Northampton County

In Fall 2002 Extension Agent Brenda Holden sought input from various community groups and sent out 71 letters to Northampton County citizens who had been identified as potential members for the TLT. These letters contained a brief overview of the TOP project and an invitation to attend the first TLT meeting scheduled on November 21, 2002 at Northampton High School. This letter, along with a list of the recipients, can be found in Appendix B. Telephone calls to individuals residing in Cheapside, Cape Charles, Bayview, Nassawadox, and New Road reinforced the importance of community representation at this meeting.

Ten community leaders attended on November 21, representing various groups in Northampton County. Extension Agent Brenda Holden, Special Projects Coordinator Jennifer Haycox, and VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson invited them to join the Northampton TLT. Jon Johnson described the goals of the TOP project and the steps in moving it forward, including the *Take Charge* process. Brenda Holden then asked the following questions of the group:

- Who else needs to be here?

- How do we recruit more participation?
- Is this meeting time okay?
- Is this meeting location okay?
- Are the expected tasks too difficult?

The group decided that local government, the faith-based community, and schools needed more representation. Participants intended to recruit five more people before the next meeting. The time and location of future meetings were set, and it was agreed that the expected tasks could be accomplished.

These questions brought up other issues, including the fact that many people do not have access to the Internet, or do not know how to use it. Also discussed were the many potential uses of the Internet in local communities. Based on this meeting, the TLT was organized. The list of members as of March 3, 2003 appears in Appendix B.

IDENTIFYING COUNTY ISSUES AND SETTING GOALS

TAKE CHARGE

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

Objectives of the *Take Charge* Program

The objectives of *Take Charge* are to:

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

The *Take Charge* Workshops

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

Workshop #1 - Where are we now?

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

Workshop #2 - Where do we want to be?

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

Workshop #3 - How do we get there?

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

Expected Outcomes of *Take Charge*

The expected outcomes of *Take Charge* are to:

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

Northampton County's *Take Charge* Sessions

Northampton County's first *Take Charge* session, "Where are we now," took place on January 15, 2003 in the Northampton County Extension Office in Exmore. There were 5 participants.

VCE Area Specialist Jon Johnson presented a synopsis of Northampton County history, including the fact that Northampton County has the oldest continuous records in the nation, dating back to 1632. Following this, Pamela Gibson, VCE Community Initiatives Specialist, led the participants through a series of slides illustrating the educational level, economic situation, and employment patterns in Northampton County as compared to Virginia as a whole. Several trends were immediately apparent including low educational attainment, a high level of poverty, and a rising population of 25- to 44-year-olds. Using these facts the group compiled a list of strengths and weaknesses of their county.

The second session of *Take Charge*, “Where do we want to be,” was held on January 22, 2003 at Northampton High School. There were 12 participants. The strengths and weaknesses identified in the first session were reintroduced with several more being added.

Strengths of Northampton County (not ranked)

Strengths
Access to capital – local banks and local brokers
Vocational and technical training opportunities
Natural resources and protective organizations – Nature Conservancy, etc.
Good communication among citizens and elected officials
One high school with good student/teacher ratio
Adequate building space
Quality health services
Geographic location including Barrier Islands
Proximity to larger markets
Friendliness of citizens
Proactive county government
Proximity to water resources
Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel
Air quality

Regional partnership
Moderate climate

Northampton County weaknesses receiving the highest rankings follow below.

Weaknesses	Number of Votes Received
Limited employment opportunities providing benefits	7
Lack of affordable/quality housing	7
High incidence of overall poverty and generational poverty	6
Poor quality education system and poor teacher abilities	5
Lack of diversified industries	5
Not enough resource sharing	3
Poor personal management skills and work ethic	2
Need for stronger and more reliable vocational and technical education	2
Need for greater protection of natural resources, including more recycling	2
Limited tax base	2
Too many underemployed	2
Poor management of local markets	2
Need for a communications infrastructure	1
Need for more public/private partnerships	1

Following the ranking activity, the participants split into three groups and were given maps of Northampton County. Each working group was asked to describe their “ideal county.”

Group 1 envisioned a county in which:

- everyone has jobs and money to spend
- there are plenty of public parks and beaches
- everyone has broadband Internet access
- every child goes to school and is prepared for college or technical training
- every child has two parents and lots of community involvement

- there is a community center for socializing and the arts
- everyone recycles
- the Eastern Shore is globally recognized

Group 2 envisioned a county with:

- museums
- a reverse osmosis plant
- a tourist center
- a sailing academy
- a conference center and hotel
- a low industrial technical park
- a YMCA or wellness center
- affordable housing
- libraries
- public beach access
- natural areas

Group 3 envisioned a community in which:

- all children are school-ready and there is an accountable education system
- training is linked to job needs
- there are more public and private partnerships
- there is an inclusive communications infrastructure
- there is affordable housing
- there is more support for the public transportation system.

This exercise concluded the second *Take Charge* workshop.

The third and final session, “How do we get there,” took place on January 29, 2003 at Northampton High School in Eastville. There were 12 participants.

To begin, the county strengths and weaknesses ranked in Session 2 were reviewed. This led to a discussion of several issues, including the need for affordable, quality housing, living wage jobs and training, and citizen involvement in local government. At this time Pamela Gibson helped the group explore ways to bring about the community involvement that was needed. Suggestions included:

- a regular presence by members of the TLT at monthly Board of Supervisors meetings
- requesting that citizens be invited to attend regular meetings of the Economic Development Advisory Board
- distribution or improved availability of newsletters from all local agencies or organizations
- compiling a list of locations of all public access computers in the county and publishing that list in the local newspaper

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

- provide individuals with the opportunity to enhance their quality of life through technology
- improve infrastructure and access to technology
- expand the use of technology in the communities to conduct business and community activities online
- increase, through technology, the Eastern Shore's visibility to the outside world

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

DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF THE WEB SITE

In Northampton County the TLT and NFTF had similar goals in support of technology and economic development. In fact, an issue from the outset was the perceived overlap of the proposed TOP web site with the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal, already in place. Early on the Northampton TLT through Brenda Holden made contact with the NFTF and established a cooperative relationship that kept both groups informed of developments. Jennifer Haymore, Special Projects Coordinator in the Northampton County Extension Office and web administrator for the Eastern Shore Portal, also assisted with TOP activities. TOP Project Coordinator Jaime Shetrone and BEV staff in Blacksburg were moving ahead on the development of the Northampton county web site and TLT input on layout, content, and operating procedures was required. Information and training sessions had to be scheduled by the BEV staff to prepare local volunteers to take over administration of the county site.

Regular monthly meetings of the Northampton County TLT and occasional meetings with the NFTF began in Summer 2003. The minutes of these meetings which follow below summarize the issues discussed, the decisions made, and the community partnerships established.

Networked Future Task Force – June 18, 2003 – Northampton County Extension Office, Exmore

Present: 2 NFTF members, Extension Agent Brenda Holden, Special Projects Coordinator Jennifer Haycox

Brenda Holden updated the NFTF representatives on TOP progress, and they viewed the beginning drafts of the Accomack and Northampton web sites.

Technology Leadership Team – August 20, 2003 – Northampton County Extension Office, Exmore

BEV staff member Robert Roberts demonstrated the Discussion Forum that will be part of the TOP site. A local moderator for the Forum must be appointed and trained before the site can go live. Mathew Mathai, TOP Project Director, will attend the September meeting and conduct a demonstration of the Village Directory. TLT members will decide on the layout, color scheme, site map, and content of the Northampton site at that time.

Technology Leadership Team - September 11, 2003 – Northampton County Extension Office, Exmore

Present: 1 TLT member, VCE Agent Brenda Holden, Special Projects Coordinator Jennifer Haycox, TOP Project Director Mathew Mathai

Mathew Mathai used PowerPoint to describe the Village Mall option on the web site and how it can be used to support local businesses. The group discussed the Technology Assessment and Master Plan to be developed by John Nichols of Network Infrastructure and Services, Virginia Tech. Because of the low attendance, decisions regarding the Northampton web site were postponed until the next meeting.

Networked Future Task Force (NFTF) – October 29, 2003 – Northampton County Extension Office, Exmore

Present: 5 NFTF members, VCE Agent Brenda Holden, Special Projects Coordinator Jennifer Haycox

Brenda Holden described the Virtual Business Incubator and Community Connections features that will be available on the TOP site and their potential benefit to the community. She updated the group on the Technology Assessment and Master Plan that will be completed in Accomack and Northampton Counties. Mathew Mathai, TOP Project Director, will be setting up a meeting on the Eastern Shore with John Nichols for all interested parties. This will be a two-day meeting with the first day devoted to roundtable discussion, and the second to a tour of the Eastern Shore.

Decision to Integrate the TOP and NFTF Community Networks

Throughout this project TLT and NFTF members expressed the concern that a community web site serving the Eastern Shore, the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal, already existed. The TOP site was viewed as a duplication of effort and so little work was done on the Northampton site. A meeting that included representatives from the Northampton County TLT, the Accomack County TLT, and the NFTF was called for January 14, 2004 to resolve this question.

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

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

Decision to merge the network sites: After a lengthy discussion, the group decided that it made good sense to adopt the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal site (<http://www.easternshorevirginiaportal.com>) as the community web site for both Accomack and Northampton Counties. To ensure the participation of both counties in future decision-making, all current members of both TLTs were invited to join with the NFTF to form one team. As to site content, the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal offered four of the six site features available on

the proposed TOP site. The Community Connections and the Virtual Business Incubator programs from BEV, important for new businesses and nonprofit groups, were added to the Portal. The domain name “esvp.bev.net” was chosen for the Virtual Business Incubator accounts to be hosted by BEV. The Virginia Electronic Commerce Technology Center will discuss the technicalities of implementation with the BEV staff in Blacksburg.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Goal statement for the NFTF: The group developed a goal statement to guide the future activities of the NFTF and the expanded Eastern Shore Portal. The major intent was to keep a focus on the well being of the communities served. *The mission of the NFTF is to improve the quality of life on the Eastern Shore of Virginia by enhancing communications services that will facilitate economic development, increase the vitality of civic and cultural discourse, and provide technological assistance to the local business community. Its main activities are to promote the Eastern Shore as a location for business and a destination for tourists, and teach the*

region's businesses how to increase sales and create jobs through the use of electronic commerce.

COMMUNITY READINESS WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING

The community readiness workshops described in the Implementation Plan were intended to help local citizens learn the skills needed to participate in web site programs such as the Virtual Business Incubator and Community Connections. Another goal for these workshops was to prepare TLT members or other local volunteers to assume responsibility for the management and content of their county site after the grant was completed.

Training for the Technology Leadership Team

Early in the project training was offered to the local TLT members with the idea that they would share the concepts they learned with others in the organizations and communities they represented. On August 20, 2003 BEV staff member Robert Roberts trained the Northampton TLT on the use and administration of the Discussion Forum. TOP Project Director Mathew Mathai met with the Northampton TLT on September 11, 2003 to provide an overview of the web site Village Mall (business directory).

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

Training for the Community

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

Informational Meeting on Web Site Opportunities

On June 18, 2003 the Northampton County Extension Office held one-on-one meetings with TLT members and other community residents with an interest in registering their organization or business on the Community Connections or Virtual Business Incubator.

Eastern Shore E-Business Training Series

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

Suggestions for additional workshops included:

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

Preparing to be Your Own Boss

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

Using Community Connections and the Virtual Business Incubator

Six people participated in a workshop on May 21, 2004 at the Northampton County Extension Office to learn more about the Community Connections and Virtual Business Incubator. One signed up for a Community Connections account and five signed up for Virtual Business Incubator accounts.

MARKETING AND PUBLICITY EFFORTS

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

“Northampton leaders to discuss economic plan;” *Eastern Shore News*; November 16, 2002.

“Meeting held on technology opportunities;” *Eastern Shore News*; November 30, 2002.

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

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

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

About Northampton County: Technology Opportunities Program: Brochure produced by the Northampton County Office, Virginia Cooperative Extension

PROGRAM EVALUATION

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

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

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

Take Charge Program

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

Previous participation in a community planning process

Attendance at the *Take Charge* sessions in Northampton County ranged from 5 at Session 1 to 12 at Sessions 2 and 3. With *Take Charge* we hoped to attract not only people who had a history of attendance and participation in local government meetings, but also to encourage newcomers to become more active in community planning. Letters of invitation were sent to government officials and others whose title or affiliation with a local organization indicated their interest or role in the community. Newspaper and radio announcements were used to attract individuals who may not have participated previously in a community issues forum. Only one person at Session 1 had received a letter; the others had read about the meeting in the newspaper, heard a radio announcement, or were told about it by someone else. In Sessions 2 and 3, the majority of those attending had heard about the meeting through word of mouth, the newspaper, or other means. Four of the residents attending Session 3 had not taken part in a community planning process at an earlier time.

Reasons given for attending *Take Charge* centered on wanting to learn more about their community and their government. People pointed to their interest in their community and their desire to get more involved. In the words of one participant, “Trying to learn something that would make me feel good about our future.” Overall, the sessions were considered to be useful, especially Session 3 which included the development of an action plan for moving the County forward.

Reactions to the Overall Process and Outcomes

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

The Goals for Northampton County by the Year 2020 were presented to the Northampton Board of Supervisors and can provide a basis for continuing discussion and community development.

(The tabulated responses from all *Take Charge* questionnaires can be found in Appendix E.)

Thoughts from the TLT

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

What are your general impressions of the project?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What were some of the things that went well?

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

What were some things that didn't go well?

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

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

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

What would you do differently?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What collaboration has resulted from this project?

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

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

Participation in the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal

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

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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

- The *Take Charge* process in Northampton County was effective in attracting some residents who previously had not participated in a community planning forum. The participants learned something new about their county and had generally positive reactions to the process. The issues and action steps identified through *Take Charge* were passed on to the Northampton Board of Supervisors.
- The partnership established between the Eastern Shore Virginia Portal and the Blacksburg Electronic Village has combined both resources and expertise to support economic growth and quality of life on the Eastern Shore. It has made possible a community network with a breadth and depth that surpasses what either could have achieved working alone. In its early development, the Eastern Shore Portal focused on business and economic matters. In the past year a Discussion Board was established to encourage community interchange and participation in local government and decision-making. A directory of community and service organizations, including faith-based groups, has been added to help meet the needs of youth and families. A community calendar keeps people aware of local educational, recreational, and service activities, and so enhances the quality of life on the Eastern Shore. Through a cooperative agreement, the BEV is hosting the Community Connections and Virtual Business Incubator programs that are helping community organizations and new businesses establish a web presence. Northampton County had one of the larger numbers of initial sign-ups for these programs (6), with one person registering for a Community Connections account and five people registering for a Virtual Business Incubator account. These numbers have now grown to four and ten, respectively.
- The bringing together of the Eastern Shore Portal and the TOP project has strengthened the partnership between Northampton and Accomack Counties. The Portal has a regional focus in serving both Northampton and Accomack and a joint approach to economic growth, the acquisition of resources, and the promotion of tourism benefits both counties. The merger of the Northampton and Accomack TLTs with the NFTF ensures that both counties will continue to have a voice in decisions relating to site content and policy.

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

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

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

LESSONS LEARNED

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

Conduct a Situation Analysis

Identifying competing projects

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

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

Focusing on counties rather than individual communities

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

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

Ensuring availability of sufficient volunteers

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

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

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

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

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

Seeking an enthusiastic leader

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

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

Arranging for training facilities

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

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

Plans for Project Implementation

Conducting *Take Charge*

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

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

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

Recruiting a Technology Leadership Team

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

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

Attracting volunteers both with and without technical skills

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

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

Scheduling meeting times

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

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

Estimating time commitment

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

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

Setting web site policies and procedures

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

Examples of questions forwarded to the BEV team included:

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

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

Appendix A – Project Implementation Materials

Contents:

- Services Provided to the TOP Counties by the Blacksburg Electronic Village
- TOP Implementation Plan
- Letter of Commitment from the Northampton 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 NORTHAMPTON BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



Board of Supervisors of Northampton County
Fasfville, Virginia 23347

Lance L. Metzler
County Administrator

PHONE: 757-678-0440
FAX: 757-678-0483

March 7, 2001

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
John W. White, Sr., Chairman
Felton T. Sessoms, Vice Chairman
Oliver H. Bennett
Thomas H. Dixon, III
Laurence J. Trala
Suzanne S. Wescoat

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

Dear Dr. Cohill:

On behalf of Chairman Felton Sessoms and the Northampton County Board of Supervisors, I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the "Getting Rural Virginia Connected" program. I understand that this program is a cooperative effort between the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service and the Blacksburg Electronic Village to work with underserved, rural communities to acquire and effectively use the technological and telecommunications systems needed to enhance economic well-being and maintain the traditional high quality of life in rural America.

The County will agree to work with the Extension Service in order to assemble and support a committed local team to provide guidance and leadership for the program and to serve as the primary contact during the eighteen month effort and beyond. Additionally, the Board agrees to create and support a local process to handle funds and to oversee the long term sustainability of the project. Finally, the Board agrees to consider the allocation of funding (\$2,000.00) in the upcoming FY 2002 budget deliberations as well as the FY 03 and FY 04 budgets.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

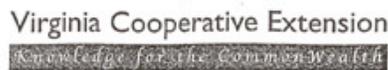
Lance L. Metzler
LANCE L. METZLER
County Administrator

Appendix B – Recruitment and Composition of the Technology Leadership Team

Contents:

- Letter of invitation to the initial Northampton County Technology Leadership Team Meeting
- List of individuals invited to the initial Northampton County Technology Leadership Team meeting
- List of Northampton Technology Leadership Team members
- List of Networked Future Task Force members

LETTER OF INVITATION TO JOIN THE NORTHAMPTON COUNTY TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP TEAM



Northampton County Extension Office
5432-A Bayside Road
Exmore, Virginia 23350
Phone: 757-414-0731 Fax: 757-414-0745
Email: ex131@vt.edu

November 8, 2002



Dear _____,

The Northampton County Cooperative Extension Office, in partnership with the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) and the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP), is working to create a Technology Leadership Team (TLT) to implement the TOP Program in Northampton County. Enclosed with this letter is additional information about the TOP Program and how it will benefit citizens of Northampton County.

You have been selected as a potential member of this group. Your work in the county distinguishes you as a community leader with a forward-thinking vision of the future. The Northampton County TLT will work together with local government, the Northampton County Extension Office, BEV, and TOP to implement the *Take Charge* curriculum to improve the telecommunications infrastructure (technology resources) in Northampton County.

If you are interested in participating in this exciting opportunity, kindly complete the enclosed registration form and mail or fax it to the Northampton County Extension Office at 5432-A Bayside Road, Exmore, Virginia 23350 by **Tuesday, November 19, 2002**. The fax # is 757-414-0745.

The first meeting of the Northampton County TLT will be on **Thursday, November 21, 2002**, from 6:00pm – 8:00pm, at Northampton High School in Eastville. I look forward to seeing you there, and to working with you to lead Northampton County into the Technology Age.

Sincerely,

Brenda E. Holden, MS, FCS
Senior Extension Agent/Unit Coordinator

Enclosures

www.ext.vt.edu

Extension is a joint program of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state and local governments.

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, veteran status, national origin, disability, or political affiliation. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

400-003

Individuals Invited to the Initial Northampton County Technology Leadership Team Meeting

Member	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
A. Wayne Mears	Nassawadox	Mayor, Town of Nassawadox
Alice Coles	Cheriton	Bayview Citizens for Social Justice
B.B. “Barry” Downing, Jr.	Cheriton	Council Member, Town of Cheriton
Barbara Custis	Nassawadox	
Bobby W. Berry	Eastville	Council Member, Town of Eastville
Bruce L. Evans	Cape Charles	Council Member, Town of Cape Charles
Carol Evans	Cape Charles	
Charles D. Massey	Exmore	Council Member, Town of Exmore
Charles F. Brown	Cape Charles	Council Member, Town of Cape Charles
Charles G. Ward, Sr.	Exmore	Council Member, Town of Exmore
Claude Francis Jones	Nassawadox	Council Member, Town of Nassawadox
Dave Magruder	Nassawadox	Marketing Director, Shore Health Services, Inc.
David J. Scanlan	Exmore	Council Member, Town of Exmore
David L. Flora	Cape Charles	Council Member, Town of Cape Charles
Denard Spady	Eastville	Executive Director, Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore
Dianne Dawson, M.A.	Machipongo	Business Development Coach, Dawson Resources, LLC
Donald P. Kellam, Sr.	Exmore	Council Member, Town of Exmore
Douglas J. Coburn	Eastville	Council Member, Town of Eastville
Dr. S. Dawn Goldstine	Machipongo	Division Superintendent, Northampton County Public Schools
Edgar S. Sturgis	Eastville	Mayor, Town of Eastville
Eleanor C. Gordon	Eastville	Council Member, Town of Eastville
F.A. “Frank” Lewis	Cape Charles	Mayor, Town of Cape Charles
F.A. “Fred” Biesinger	Cheriton	Council Member, Town of Cheriton
F.W. “Fred” Gray	Eastville	Council Member, Town of Eastville
Felix Torrice	Cape Charles	President, Cape Charles/Northampton County Chamber of Commerce

Member	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
Felton T. Sessoms	Nassawadox	
Gary W. Wanger	Cheriton	Council Member, Town of Cheriton
Gerald M. Elliott	Cape Charles	Council Member, Town of Cape Charles
Gordon Lee Ward, Sr.	Eastville	Council Member, Town of Eastville
H. Lawrence West	Cheriton	Council Member, Town of Cheriton
Irene Henderson	Nassawadox	Owner, ESVA.net
J. Douglas Rippon	Cheriton	Council Member, Town of Cheriton
J. Grayson Duer	Exmore	Council Member, Town of Exmore
J.W. "Jim" Bailey	Exmore	Council Member, Town of Exmore
James Charles Sturgis	Eastville	Council Member, Town of Exmore
James E. Davis, Jr.	Cape Charles	Council Member, Town of Cape Charles
Jane G. Cabarrus	Nassawadox	President, Northampton County NAACP
Jenny Jacob Floyd	Nassawadox	Council Member, Town of Nassawadox
Jeter Guy Lawson	Exmore	Mayor, Town of Exmore
John Downing	Machipongo	Director of Vocational Education, Northampton County Public Schools
John E. Tankard, Jr.	Exmore	Tankard Nursery
John W. Hallet, Sr.	Nassawadox	Council Member, Town of Nassawadox
John W. Nottingham	Cheriton	District 1 Community Action Group
John W. White, Sr.	Cape Charles	
Kendell S. Berry	Exmore	Headmaster, Broadwater Academy
L.A. "Larry" Veber	Cape Charles	Council Member, Town of Cape Charles
L.J. "Cookie" Francis	Nassawadox	Council Member, Town of Nassawadox
Lance Metzler	Eastville	County Administrator, Northampton County
Laurence J. Trala	Exmore	
Lenora Mitchell	Cape Charles	Concerned Citizens of Cape Charles
Marvin O. Giddens	Nassawadox	
N.J. "Jim" West	Cheriton	Council Member, Town of Cheriton
Oliver H. Bennett	Birdsnest	
Ralph Dodd	Eastville	President, Northampton County Farm Bureau

Member	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
Rev. Darryl Webb	Exmore	Exmore Baptist Church
Rev. F.E. Nedab	Eastville	Bethel A.M.E. Church
Rev. Harry W. Crandall	Cape Charles	Emmanuel Episcopal Church
Rev. J. Michael Breslin	Cape Charles	St. Charles Catholic Church
Richard G. Work	Salisbury, MD	Connectiv
Robert E. Johnson	Cape Charles	Assistant Director of Maintenance, Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel District
Robert K. Lewis, Sr.	Cheriton	Mayor, Town of Cheriton
Ruth Wise	Exmore	New Road Community Development Group
Stephen W. Bralley	Nassawadox	Council Member, Town of Nassawadox
Steve Parker	Nassawadox	Director of Economic Programs, The Nature Conservancy
Suzanne Savage Wescoat	Eastville	
T. Hume Dixon III	Townsend	
Thom Henderson	Nassawadox	Owner, ESVA.net
Vicki Underhill	Machipongo	Northampton County Public Schools
Vince Campbell	Cape Charles	Bayshore Concrete Products Corporation
Willard Reade Nicolls, Jr.	Nassawadox	Council Member, Town of Nassawadox
William E. Shockley	Cheriton	

Technology Leadership Team Members (effective March 13, 2003)

Member	Town	Occupation/Affiliation
Brenda E. Holden	Exmore	Agent, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Charles Smith	Cheriton	District 1 Community Action Group
Delores Lindsay	Cheriton	DOCAG
James E. Davis, Jr.	Cape Charles	
Jennifer Haycox	Exmore	Special Project Coordinator, Virginia Cooperative Extension
John Downing	Machipongo	Northampton County Public Schools
John W. Nottingham	Cheriton	District 1 Community Action Group
Jon Johnson	Richmond	Area Specialist, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Kathryn Crawford		
Lenora Mitchell	Cape Charles	Concerned Citizens of Cape Charles
Leo Owens	Exmore	New Road Community Development Group
Marion Ames	Cape Charles	
Paul Driscoll	Eastville	
Sarah B. Gromow		
Thom Henderson	Nassawadox	ESVA.net
William Denny	Cheriton	

Networked Future Task Force Members

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

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

**Strategic Plan
for Technology**

**Eastern Shore
of Virginia**

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table of Contents

Background.....	Page 1
Vision, Mission, Strategic Direction.....	Page 3
Goals & Objectives.....	Page 4
Strategies Goal #1.....	Page 5
Strategies Goal #2.....	Page 6
Strategies Goal #3.....	Page 7
Strategies Goal #4.....	Page 8
Eastern Shore of Virginia Portal Project.....	Page 9
Community Outreach Project.....	Page 10
Community Connectivity Project.....	Page 11
Research & Funding Project.....	Page 12
Appendix 1A – ESVARP Diagram.....	Page 13
Appendix 1B – Committee Membership.....	Page 14
Appendix 2 – Definitions.....	Page 16

Background

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Vision

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

The Mission

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

The Strategic Direction

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

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

The Goals

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

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

Goal #2 - Improve infrastructure and access to technology.

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

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

The Objectives

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why is this important?

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

How are we doing?

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

What needs to be done?

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

Improve infrastructure and access to technology.

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

Why is this important?

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

How are we doing?

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

What needs to be done?

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

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

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

Why is this important?

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

How are we doing?

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

What needs to be done?

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

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

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

Why is this important?

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

How are we doing?

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

What needs to be done?

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

Eastern Shore Virginia Portal Project

Overview

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

Partners

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

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

Accomplishments

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

Evaluation of Project

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

Community Outreach Project

Overview of Project

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

Partners

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

Accomplishments

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

Evaluation of Project

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

Community Connectivity Project

Overview of Project

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

Partners

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

Accomplishments

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

Evaluation of Project

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

Research & Funding Projects

Overview of Project

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

Partners

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

Accomplishments

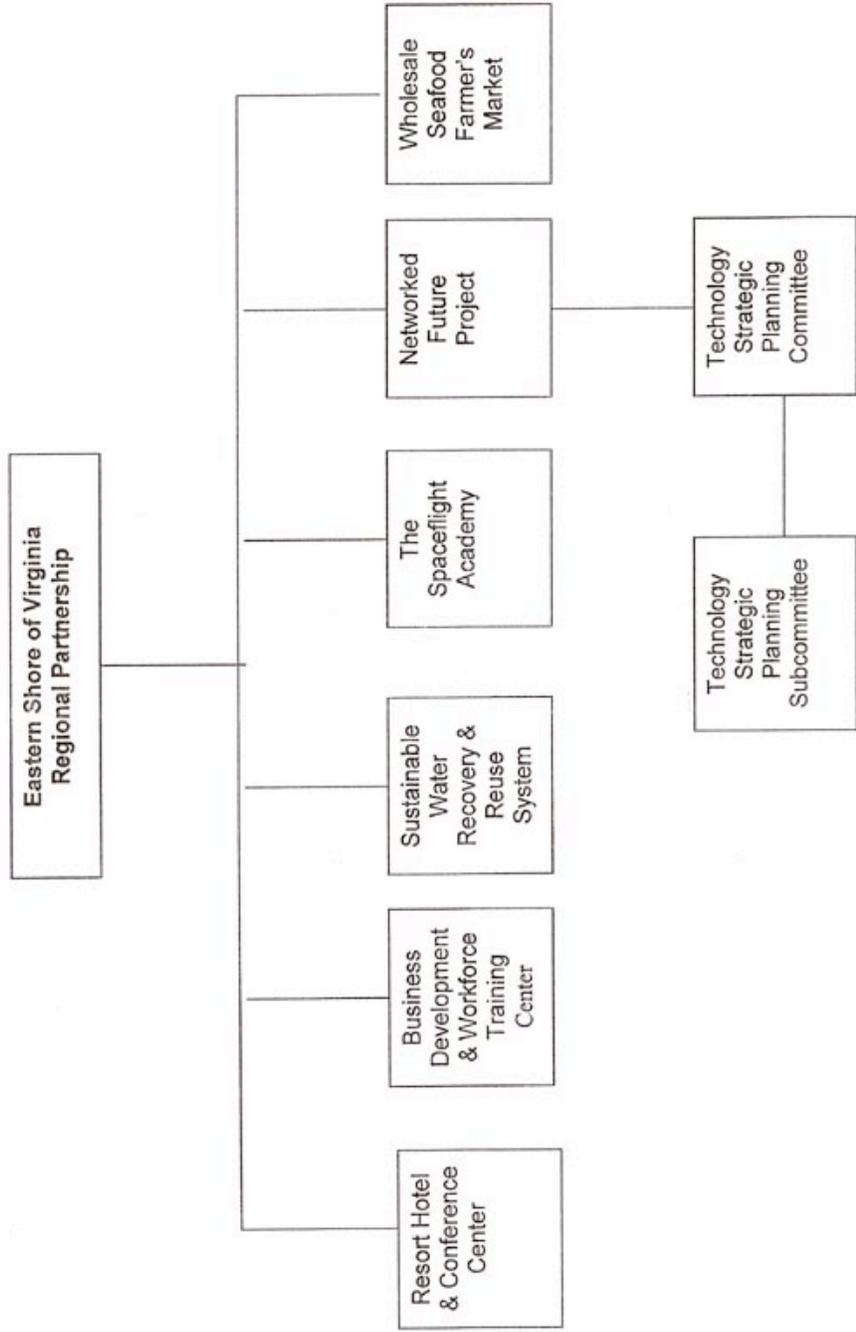
The Research Project, with the help of Old Dominion University's Social Science Research Center, successfully completed The E-Commerce Business Survey in the summer of 2000. This survey was used to target local businesses as potential users of e-commerce. Other research projects planned for the future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

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

Evaluation of Program

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

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



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

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

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

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

Definitions

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

CIT – Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology

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

Cyberlaw – Laws that govern the use of the Internet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ISP – Internet Service Provider

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

Quality of Life – Average standards within a community.

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

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

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

VECTEC – Virginia's Electronic Commerce and Technology Center

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

Appendix D – Marketing and Publicity Materials

Contents:

“Northampton leaders to discuss economic plan;” *Eastern Shore News*; November 16, 2002.

“Meeting held on technology opportunities;” *Eastern Shore News*; November 30, 2002.

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

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

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

About Northampton County: Technology Opportunities Program: Brochure produced by the Northampton County Office, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Northampton leaders to discuss economic plan

On Thursday, Nov. 21, community leaders in Northampton County will gather at Northampton High School for an orientation meeting to implement the Take Charge curriculum for economic development in small communities. Take Charge is a strategic planning method developed by extension service workers in universities in Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Indiana. The program's aim is to bring representatives of the business, education, local government and agriculture together to map out an economic development plan that would give local government leaders ideas for future development.

The Take Charge curriculum is being used in partnership with the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) developed by the Blacksburg Electronic Village to help rural communities in Virginia develop the capacities needed to prosper in the Information Age economy. However, although technological advancements, town & county websites, and computer/Internet training are very much a part of the TOP Program, it is expected that by using the Take Charge curriculum, leaders in Northampton County will be able to identify a broad spectrum of community needs as well as an action plan to meet those needs.

Following the orientation meeting on Nov. 21, where community leaders and other interested participants will be introduced to the Take Charge program, the Northampton County Extension Office and representatives of the TOP Program will hold three planning meetings on Jan. 8, 15, and 22. These meetings will follow the Take Charge curriculum to identify "Where are we now?", "Where do we want to be?", and "How do we get there?"

EASTERN SHORE NEWS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2002

"Where are we now" is intended to help participants examine the current trends and characteristics of the community, to better understand the economy of the community, and to assess opportunities for economic growth and to promote community teamwork.

"Where do we want to be" will help participants brainstorm, examine and analyze the possibilities for economic development in the community. The outcome will be a selection of strategies for which a plan of action will be developed.

"How do we get there" is the final session in which information and analysis derived from the previous sessions will be used to organize the project committees and a steering committee, and to develop a plan of action.

Participation in the Take Charge Program is free and open to the public. Any interested members of the community who want to play an active role in the development of Northampton County's assets can join by calling Brenda Holden at the Northampton County Extension Office at 757-414-0731. The Orientation meeting will be held on Thursday, Nov. 21, from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m., at Northampton High School in Eastville. Refreshments will be served. All subsequent meetings will be held on their prospective dates at Northampton High School from 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Meeting held on technology opportunities

On Thursday, Nov. 21, citizens of Northampton County met at Northampton High School to begin the process of connecting this rural community. Brenda Holden, Unit Coordinator & Senior Extension Agent for Northampton County, and Jon Johnson, Extension Area Specialist for Virginia Cooperative Extension, presented the group with information about the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP).

TOP is a program funded by the U.S. Department of Com-

merce that is working with nine other rural counties in Virginia to help them develop the tools needed to prosper in the Information Age economy. In addition to training local extension agents in leadership and technology, TOP is also working to create citizen teams, composed of a broad section of people, to lead the efforts at the local level. TOP will also work with these Technology Leadership Teams (TLTs) to implement the Take Charge program.

Take Charge is a proven-ef-

fective method of identifying community strengths, weaknesses, visions, and plans. During the month of January, three community meetings will be held to follow the Take Charge model. This model consists of workgroups answering the questions, Where Are We Now?, Where Do We Want To Be?, and How Do We Get There?

Another vital element of the TOP Program is the development of online community networking systems. This will include creation of web sites for

local towns and community groups, web site hosting, online directories, e-mail accounts, and online discussion boards.

The Northampton County Technology Leadership Team (NCTLT) will be recruiting community members to participate in efforts being led by TOP, including the Take Charge workgroup meetings in January. For more information, or to get involved with this movement, contact Brenda Holden at the Northampton County Extension Office at 414-0731.

The Portal Newsletter, December, 2002

Eastern Shore 
VIRGINIA PORTAL

The Portal Newsletter December 2002

In this Issue:

<i>Interactive Calendar available on Portal</i>	1
<i>What's New on the Shore?</i>	1
<i>Business News</i>	1
<i>Community News</i>	1
<i>Agriculture News</i>	2
<i>What's New in Technology?</i>	3
<i>Focus on Shore Folks</i>	
<i>TOP Program on Shore</i>	3
<i>Upcoming Events – Featured Calendar</i>	4

Interactive Calendar Available on Portal:

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

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

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

What's New on the Shore?

Business:

First Meeting set for Shore Entrepreneurs

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

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

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

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

Community:

A rare monetary prize for two priceless educators

The Virginian-Pilot

© October 24, 2002

Sometimes, the good guys win.

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

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

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

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

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

What's New in Technology?

N.C. links Internet, economy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Focus on Shore Folks

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

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

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

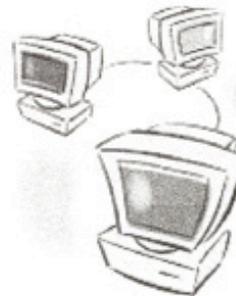
For more information about the TOP Program in your area, contact Brenda Holden in Northampton County at 757-414-0731, or Pauline Milbourne in Accomack County at 757-787-1361.

More sites of interest:

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

<http://www.bev.net>

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



The Portal Newsletter, March, 2003



The Portal Newsletter March 2003

In this Issue:

Portal Spotighting Local Organization:
Northampton Alliance Against Trash..... 1

What's New on the Shore?

Business News

Wind Farms off the Eastern Shore?..... 1

Community News

Take Charge in Acc. & NH Ctys.....2

Child Care Conference May 1st.....2

SEE Health Fair 2003..... 2

Agriculture News

Gov. Warner to address Ag Summit.....3

2003 Pest Mgmt Guides Available.....3

What's New in Technology?

*Creation of Va Institute for Defense
 And Homeland Security*.....3

Featured Newsletter – CBES.....3

Upcoming Events.....4

Portal Spotighting Local Organization:

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

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



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

What's New on the Shore?

Business News:

Wind farms off the Eastern Shore?

Virginia Business Magazine – January 2003

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Community News:

Accomack and Northampton County Take Charge

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ninth Annual Child Care Conference May 1st

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

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

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

Come out and SEE Health Fair 2003

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

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

Agriculture News:

Governor Warner to Address Virginia Agriculture Summit

January 30, 2003

Contact: Marion Horsley, 804/225-3820

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

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

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

Eastern Shore News, April 7, 2004

EASTERN SHORE NEWS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2004

Website help classes set

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

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

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

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

The registration deadline for the sessions is April 19.

HighMark
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Technology Opportunities Program Brochure

Facts About TOP

- TOP is a grant funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce to "Get Rural Virginia Connected"
- The Blacksburg Electronic Village and Virginia's Cooperative Extension Service are partners in TOP, working to help rural communities in Virginia move into the Information Age.
- The purpose of the grant is to set up these communities with a community network, and guide them in using it as a tool to improve local economic conditions and community involvement in decision making.
- The grant uses four key programs:
 - Leadership and technology training for local and area extension agents.
 - Citizen teams comprised of a broad cross-section of people with varying responsibilities and interests.
 - The Take Charge program provides ongoing support and resources for the citizen-based planning process. More information about Take Charge is inside this flyer.
 - A tested, turnkey community network system, including:
 - e-mail
 - web hosting
 - design assistance
 - mailing lists
 - directories
 - online conference system

For more information about programs in Virginia, visit the following websites:

Blacksburg Electronic Village
www.bev.net

Technology Opportunities Program
www.top.bev.net

VA Tech's eCorridors Project
www.ecorridors.vt.edu

Eastern Shore Virginia Portal
www.easternshorevirginiaportal.com

Virginia Electronic Commerce Technology Center
www.vecotec.org

Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology
www.cit.org

Virginia's Main Street to E-Street Taskforce
<http://www.councils.cit.org/ms2es/>

*If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services, or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Northampton County Extension at (757) 414-0731 during business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to discuss accommodations five (5) days prior to the event. *TDD number is (800) 828-1120.*

Virginia Cooperative Extension is an Educational Service of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and Virginia State University, Virginia's Land-Grant Institutions, with U.S. Department of Agriculture and Local Governments Cooperating. Programs, activities, and employment opportunities are available to all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicap, or political affiliation. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.



About Northampton County

Technology

Opportunities

Program

Presented by the Technology Leadership Team

**To participate in this program,
or to join the Northampton
County Technology Leadership
Team, please contact Brenda
Holden or Jennifer Haycox at
the Northampton County
Extension Office at
757-414-0731**

What can Take Charge do for me?

Where Are We Now?

Do you see problems, or missing elements, in your community?

Are you interested in working with your neighbors to effect change?

Do you want to have a voice about the issues?

Are you aware of both the strengths & weaknesses in your community?

This program will help participants:

- Examine the current trends and characteristics,
- Understand the economy,
- Assess opportunities, and
- Promote community teamwork.

***Northampton High School
6:00pm – 8:00pm
Tuesday, January 15, 2003***

Where Do We Want To Be?

Do you have a vision for the future of the Eastern Shore?

Do you have ideas about how to make your community better?

Do you feel that the Shore has more possibilities for economic development?

Do you enjoy brainstorming ideas with your neighbors as part of a team?

This program will help participants:

- Brainstorm possibilities
- Examine possibilities
- Analyze possibilities, and
- Select strategies for economic development.

***Northampton High School
6:00pm – 8:00pm
Tuesday, January 22, 2003***

How Do We Get There?

Do you like to see plans get put into action?

Are you looking for a way to be involved in your community?

Would you like to meet new people, work side-by-side with local government, and see your opinions & ideas make a difference?

This program will help participants:

- Organize project committees,
- Develop a plan of action,
- Identify goals, and
- Outline objectives.

***Northampton High School
6:00pm – 8:00pm
Tuesday, January 29, 2003***

Appendix E – Program Evaluation Materials

Contents: Evaluations from *Take Charge* sessions

Reason for participation

- Become informed.
- Want to be involved in my community.
- Interested in the community.
- Interested in community.

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

- Thank you for holding this workshop.

Have you participated in a community planning process before? 9 – Yes 2 - No

Reason for participation

- Interest in county.
- To improve Northampton County.
- Hope. Trying to learn something that would make me feel good about our future.
- Interested in any group discussions/planning sessions concerning the future of Northampton County.
- Working with a community non-profit group.
- Part of my employment.
- Concern about the progress.
- Interest in community.
- To be involved.
- Interest in community.
- Being informed and involved.

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

Reason for participation

- For the good of the county.
- Want to be involved.
- To understand what members of my community considered important issues.
- Has been a part of my occupation for past 5 years.
- I want to learn about how the local government operates.
- Willing to learn more, help more in community.
- To be informed.
- Need for change.
- Concern about economic development for low to moderate income people.
- Willing to learn, help more in the community.
- Interest in community.

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

Appendix F – Benchmark Report

Benchmark Report

Prepared by

Pamela Gibson
Community Initiatives Specialist
Virginia Cooperative Extension

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

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

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

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

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

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

For all of the counties, team recruitment has continued to be part of the process to keep the project alive. Counties having the most difficulty with this step were those who didn't advertise broad base recruitment. By limiting team membership to only those known to have technical skills, participation by the community became significantly restricted and left all of the work to a few.

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

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

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

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

programs were well received by participants and led to further involvement in the TOP project and community activities. Even the two less successful counties, found that this community empowerment program resulted in new involvement for citizens and their communities. In addition, this process provided improved membership in the TLTs.

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

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

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

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

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

John Nichols used the information he gathered doing the Technology Assessments in each of the counties to develop a Technology Master Plan. The Technology Master Plans are the 14th and

final benchmark for this project. These plans will be completed at the end of the funding cycle and will be shared with the counties.