



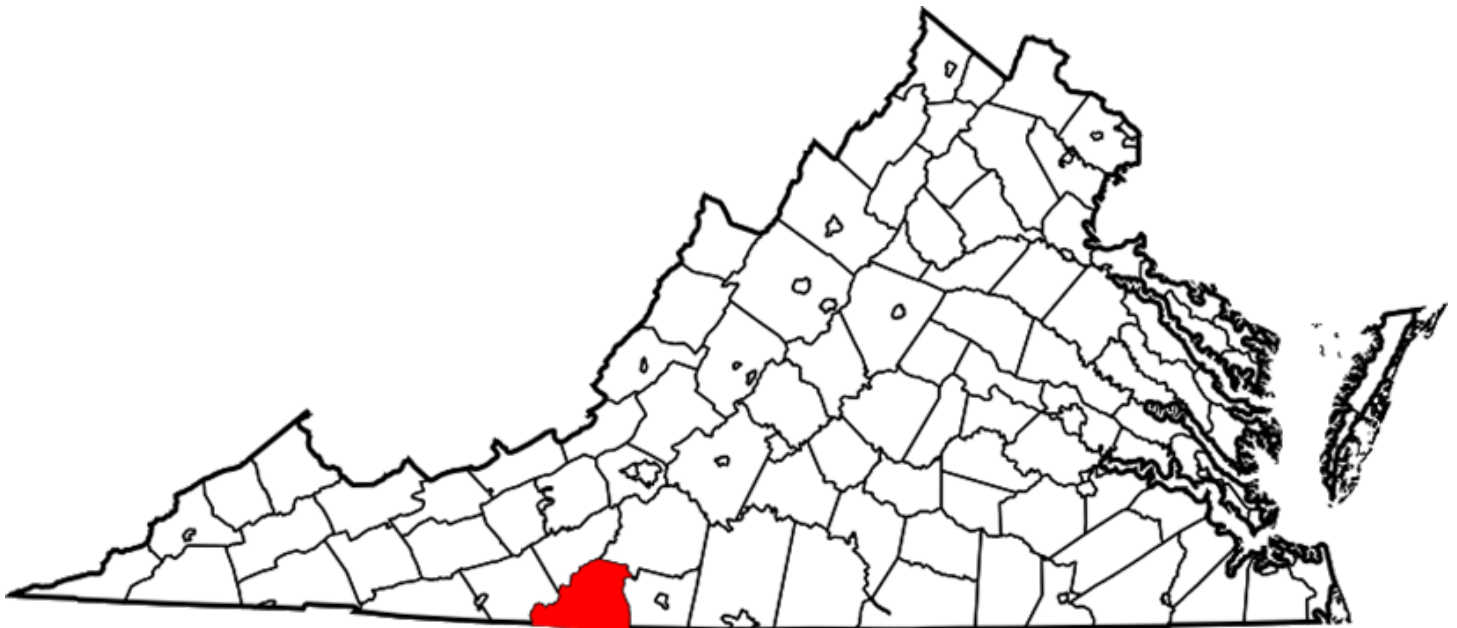
# Virginia Cooperative Extension

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## Patrick County 2023 Situation Analysis Report

*Terri Alt, Unit Coordinator, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Leigh Ann Hazelwood, 4-H Agent, Christian Taylor, ANR Agent, Tamika Reynolds, Unit Administrative Assistant, Kristy Hughes, Program Assistant, Teresa Rakes, SNAP-Ed Program Assistant, ELC Members: Braedon Augustine, Vonita Brim, Angie Brown, Patricia Crissman, Angela Dribben, Ureka Hines, Nick Pendleton, Jon Wood*



Top Ten Issues Identified by Needs Assessment			
	High Effort	Very High Effort	Total Percentage
Protecting natural resources	88	87	77.8
Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship and other life skills	86	88	77.3
Strengthening the local food system	85	80	73.3
Assisting farmers and forest landowners in production and profitability	96	68	72.9
Ensuring safe food handling practices to prevent foodborne illness	74	89	72.4
Preserving farm and forest land	74	89	72.4
Controlling invasive pests (plants, animals, insects)	84	74	70.2
Getting more adults involved in mentoring youth	100	57	69.8
Teaching youth and adults good money management concepts to better manage their finances	81	76	69.8

## Introduction

Patrick County conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2023. This process was led by the three Patrick County Extension Agents, unit staff and current Extension Leadership Council members. A Patrick County Unit Profile was developed with community and resident perspectives based on county issues and identified areas of concern. Data and information was analyzed by Extension office and campus personnel and priority issues were identified.

Agents met with ELC members during this situational analysis process. This group determined that the best way to gather perspectives from county residents was to conduct both a paper and electronic survey. After results from the surveys were analyzed, priority issues for Patrick County were identified, including those that could be addressed within VCE and those that were outside the scope of current VCE resources.

## Unit Profile

### Demographics

Patrick County is a rural county located in Virginia's central piedmont area with neighboring counties of Carroll to the west, Floyd and Franklin to the north, Henry to the east, and Stokes and Surry County, North Carolina to the south. The most updated data from the Virginia Employment Commission indicated a Patrick County population of 18,490. Additional data from the Virginia Employment Commission show our population in the county continuing to trend downward through at least 2040. In Patrick County there are six elementary schools, serving grades Pre-K through 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and one county high school, serving grades 8-12. Current census data shows that 83% of residents have at least a high school diploma, compared to 90% nationwide. Of those residents who continued their education past high school, 28% received an Associates, Bachelors or Master's degree.

The Patrick County population ages 0 to 44 (42%) falls well under the state average (58%) for this age group while the Patrick County population age 45 and older (58%) is well over the state average (42%). A growing older population in Patrick County must be considered when identifying health and wellness priority issues related to programming.

The racial composition of Patrick County changed only slightly since the last situation analysis report. While the white and black population showed small decreases in numbers, the Hispanic population continues to show a

steady increase. While Hispanics only make up 3.3% of Patrick County's population, their growth represents an ongoing change in the racial makeup of the county.

## **Economic**

The median household income in Patrick County (\$47,215) is slightly higher than neighboring Henry County (\$41,103), and Carroll County (\$45,220), and slightly lower than Franklin County (\$59,667). Income is still significantly lower than the state median income of \$80,615. The Virginia Employment Commission data shows Patrick County's unemployment rate at 3.6% in 2022, mirroring the national average but above the state average of 2.9%. Of those who are employed, data from the Virginia Employment Commission showed that 2765 people both lived and worked in Patrick County while 4353 residents worked at positions located outside county lines. Henry County, VA and Surry County, NC were the two highest locations that residents commuted to for employment. Patrick County's largest employers are in the fields of education, hospitality, government, retail, manufacturing and customer service.

## **Health and Well-being**

Current data shows 23% of children in Patrick County live in poverty, compared to 13% statewide. Over 16% of Patrick County's population is in poor or fair health, with obesity rates rising to 36% of the population. Tying into this troubling health statistic are doctor patient ratios of 4370 to 1 for primary care physicians, compared to 1,310 to 1 statewide, 8,800 to 1 for dentists, compared to 1,350 to 1 statewide and 2510 to 1 for mental health providers, compared to 450 to 1 statewide. The county's only hospital facility remains shuttered, adding to the healthcare insecurity of the area.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

A paper and an electronic version with a QR code was distributed throughout the county to residents, business owners, educators and volunteers. Surveys were emailed, sent through Messenger, handed out at events and placed at public venues throughout the county. The survey link was placed on our Facebook page and shared widely. ELC members also took links and paper surveys to their parts of the county and workplaces. More than 225 people responded to the Patrick County needs assessment survey. Of those who responded, 76% were female, 24% male. Residents 54 years of age or younger represented 58% of who responded, while 42% were age 55 or above. Over 83% of respondents have lived in the county for more than 10 years. Nearly 48% of respondents indicated having at least a Bachelor's degree. As for race, 94% identified as white, with 4% black and 2% multi-racial.

## **Community Issues**

### **Agriculture**

The following were the top issues identified as related to agriculture.

1. Protecting Natural Resources (lakes, rivers, springs, forest land, soil)
2. Assisting farmers and forest landowners in production and profitability
3. Controlling invasive pests (plants, animals, insects)

The issue of protecting natural resources has been an increasing concern in many communities and data shows it was listed as high importance in Patrick County. With weather extremes becoming seemingly more prominent and water quality issues becoming an increasingly popular topic, there is a huge interest in learning about and protecting the community's delicate natural resources.

Similar to previous years, another topic of high importance was assisting farmers and forest landowners with production and profitability. As markets are unpredictable and input costs continue to rise, producers are forced to become better managers in order to succeed and make a profit.

Invasive pests have also landed itself as a top spot in the county's priority issues. With input costs on the rise and profit margins becoming smaller, controlling invasive pests can be the difference between success and failure for producers. Invasive pests can be detrimental to crops, livestock, trees, aquatic life, lawns and landscapes.

## Family and Community

The following were the top issues identified as it related to family and community.

1. Ensuring safe food handling practices to prevent foodborne illness
2. Building healthy families
3. Addressing the needs of our aging population and its caregivers

The health of Patrick County residents as it relates to safe food handling practices was listed as a top priority. With foodborne-related sickness on the rise nationwide and frequent news reports related to recalls of many types of common foods, residents are concerned about the food they consume, especially when eating outside the home.

While the nuclear family unit looks different than in the past, it remains another top priority for residents. While family living arrangements become more diverse and reflect societal changes, the need for mentally and physically healthy families still exist.

Concerns about the wellbeing of Patrick County's older population also garnered a top spot on the priority list. Meeting the needs of our Boomer generation and Generation X'ers along with their caregivers was a concern for survey respondents.

## Youth Development

The following were the top issues identified as it related to youth development.

1. Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and other life skills
2. Teaching youth and adults good money management concepts to better manage their finances
3. Teaching healthy relationship skills to teens

Listed as a top priority was helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and other life skills, all essential skills needed to be successful as youth enter adulthood. Because youth are bombarded with social media on a daily basis, gaining these skills can help them to become and remain more self-confident and build self-esteem.

With the increase of the cost of living, interest rates, groceries, etc., there is a need more than ever to teach youth how to be fiscally responsible. Teaching good money management concepts and financial literacy is seen as a top priority for the community in addressing generational poverty, in an effort to break the cycle.

Another top priority listed was teaching healthy relationship skills to teens. With the socioeconomic status of our local community, many local youths living in poverty, and the shift in what a family unit consists of, there is a need for education regarding the qualities of healthy relationships and how to achieve such relationships in the face of adversity.

## Priority Issues

**Issue 1:** Assisting farmers and forest landowners in production and profitability

**Description:** According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 42% of land in Patrick County is in cropland and pastureland while 53% is in woodland. With such a large amount of land in farm and forestland, our community relies heavily on the success of farm and forest landowners. Like other business owners, farmers and forest landowners have to make smart decisions to ensure their investment is successful and profitable. Making smart decisions leads to an increase of sales, a reduction in input costs, and inevitably a more profitable business.

**VCE's role in addressing this issue:** Virginia Cooperative Extension offers a wide array of opportunities to producers at a state and local level. Opportunities can look different, but all have a common goal in mind, to make all farm businesses and forest landowners successful. VCE has extensive resources available to help its producers. Extension Specialists that assist with specific agricultural areas, publications that contain the newest research from your land grant university, and programming that provides education on management techniques, finances, and industry certifications. From one-on-one consultations from county agents to statewide farm business management sessions, VCE works to support Virginia's largest private industry.

**Issue 2:** Addressing the needs of our aging population and its caregivers

**Description:** More than 1 in 6 Americans is 65 years or older, and Patrick County mirrors this statistic as the aging population continues to grow. Along with this growth is an increased need in programming as it relates to many gerontology areas, including safe housing, nutrition, mental health, chronic disease self-management, estate planning among others.

**VCE's role in addressing this issue:** The Patrick County Extension Office conducts many programs that benefit our aging population. Senior nutrition programming will continue to be implemented at three congregate feeding sites around the county. Programming as it relates to aging at home, as well as estate planning for non-titled possessions will also be offered. As mental health issues increase with this age group, VCE has a strong partnership with our local Community Service Board to offer programming to help reduce societal stigma surrounding mental health. As many residents find themselves taking on a caregiving role, VCE will broaden its programming to offer caregiving wellbeing classes and training in caregiving for dementia patients. And as many older residents are asked to take on a parenting role for grandchildren, programming and support will be offered to help this population.

**Issue 3:** Teaching youth and adults good money management concepts to better manage their finances

**Description:** Most youth learn financial behaviors informally through socialization, learning from their guardians, or observing their peers'. Although the state of Virginia is 1 of only 23 states that require a financial literacy course as a condition of graduation, youth need to be exposed to financial literacy more extensively to help increase financial literacy while eliminating bad habits learned from observing others.

**VCE's role in addressing this issue:** The Patrick County Extension Office conducts many programs that teach financial literacy including Kids Marketplace – 4th grade and Reality Store – 12th grade. Both programs will continue to be offered across the county to address the need of teaching youth good money management concepts, helping them better manage their finances as they enter adulthood. Both programs, Kids Marketplace and Reality Store, will be updated to better meet the financial literacy needs of local youth as indicated by program evaluations received after the programs are delivered. The program update to Reality Store will include updates based on research regarding the required financial literacy course for graduation, in an effort to better compliment skills learned in the course. Both updates will also focus on tools to help reverse many of the learned financial behaviors youth have obtained from observing family and peer financial habits.

## Future Programming to Address Community Issues

Plans to assist the Patrick County agriculture community with these priority issues will take a combination of previously implemented programs as well as developing new ones. Previous programs like the Virginia Cattlemen's Association TOA Sale works to add value calves to improve profitability for cattle producers, and to promote best management practices that lead to a safe and wholesome product. Other programs could also be implemented to assist landowners that do not have a stake in livestock or grain commodities. A Farm Financial Management series would touch on different areas of agriculture and forestry. A program to teach farmers and landowners basic management skills to improve management productivity, increase profitability, and fulfill their long-term and short-term goals is also a possibility. A collaboration with Extension Specialists who are experts in the field, the local Soil and Water Conservation District, who promote agriculture best management practices to

boost farm productivity and profitability, and multiple farmers and landowners who would like to share their journey would make for a great program to assist in production and profitability.

Another of Patrick County VCE's priority issues centers around the aging population. Using curriculum from the NRV Agency on Aging and University of Minnesota Extension, the FCS agent will continue to offer classes in Aging in Place and Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate to the community. These programs help our residents adjust their homes and finances to enable them to remain in their home longer, while also thinking about the disbursement of their non-titled property. In addition to these helpful workshops, a new partnership between VCE and the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers will bring the Dealing with Dementia program to the county. This program will help alleviate the caregiver stress so common when caring for an older adult. A growing partnership with Southern Area on Aging will help with the costs associated with this new program.

One of Patrick County VCE's priority issues focuses on financial literacy and teaching youth good money management skills. The 4-H agent will continue to offer Kids Marketplace financial simulation to all county fourth graders and the Reality Store financial simulation to graduating seniors at the local high school. Both programs offer a real-world glimpse into the difficulties of making financial decisions and the repercussions of bad money management. In addition, the 4-H agent will partner with other agents on the Family and Consumer Science program team to assist in the update to the Reality Store curriculum to better address current needs and financial technology/trends. Once the Reality Store curriculum update is completed it will be implemented at the local high school with graduating seniors.

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