

Introduction

Dinwiddie County conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2013. The situation analysis process was led by the Extension Leadership Council (ELC) and involved the analysis of a Dinwiddie County Unit Profile as well as gathering community and resident perspectives on issues and problems in the county. Data and information from these two activities were analyzed by the ELC and priority issues were identified.

The ELC met two times during the situation analysis process. At the first meeting, an overview of the situation analysis process was covered. An initial situation analysis plan was developed that included tasks and timelines for ELC members and VCE staff. Based on this, and the fact that there was already an updated unit profile in place, the first task was developing and distributing a Needs Assessment Survey. A number of issues were identified from the data in the unit profile. Based on these findings, the ELC determined that the best way to gather perspectives from residents was to conduct a survey assessing the needs in each Extension area for Dinwiddie County. The ELC then decided on the groups/agencies that would receive the survey. At the second meeting of the ELC, key findings from the unit profile, and the survey results were presented and discussed and the top priority issues for Dinwiddie County identified, including those that could be addressed with current VCE resources and those that were outside the scope of current VCE resources.

Timeline

During September of 2013 the Dinwiddie Extension Office viewed Adobe Connect sessions that went over what was needed and how to obtain information about the rewriting of the Situation Analysis. Also in the month of September, the old Situation Analysis was reviewed. The unit profile had already been completed so in early October 2013 the Dinwiddie ELC and the Extension Office put together a survey to assess the programming needs of the county. Separate surveys were designed to identify critical issues for three program areas, Agriculture and Natural resources, 4-H and Youth Development and Family and Community Awareness.

Once the Surveys were completed the ELC members and unit staff identified key persons to be surveyed. The ELC and extension staff distributed approximately 150 surveys to key citizens in the community. Key recipients of the survey included county civic representatives, government personnel, and individuals and groups within the community. Examples include Dinwiddie ELC members, Agriculture Producers, School Administrators and Educators, 4-H club members and volunteers, Farm Bureau members, Social Services, County Officials, and Master Gardeners. The surveys yielded a 50% return rate from the 150 total number of surveys distributed.

In November 2013, extension staff tabulated and ranked the survey results, which were congruent with the demographical information, collected earlier. The ELC met again November 7, 2013 and reviewed and analyzed the survey data, identified the leading issues facing the community, and made recommendations to complete the Final Report.

The extension staff compiled the ELC recommendations and distributed copies to each ELC member and submitted the final report to Blacksburg by December 1, 2013.

Unit Profile

Dinwiddie County is a rural county located in Virginia's Southeastern Piedmont area with neighboring counties of Chesterfield, Amelia, Town of Colonial Heights to the north, Prince George, City of Petersburg to the east, and Sussex, Greensville and Brunswick to the south and Lunenburg and Nottoway to the west. Year 2011 census data indicated a population of 27,933 in Dinwiddie County. The more urban areas of Richmond and Hopewell are both within 30 miles away.

Population growth in Dinwiddie County has fluctuated slightly up and down over the past 13 years with the population being 29,000 in 2000 and 25,452 in 2007. The county remains mostly rural with the highest concentration of the population living near the City of Petersburg and the border of Chesterfield.

The median age of Dinwiddie County residents increased in the last decade from 38.5 to 49.5 years of age. The younger age group populations increased slightly over the last 10 years, including a small increase in children under age 18. The number of people age 25 to 44 decreased by approximately 4% and people age 60 to 85+ increased by approximately 3%.

The racial diversity of Dinwiddie County changed somewhat between 2007 and 2011. There was a small increase in the percentage of white and black populations, while the Hispanic population decreased slightly and other minorities increased. This small change still represents an emerging change in the county's demographics.

Agriculture data indicates several trends over the past 15 years. Land has been lost to development, but the number of farms has remained constant. Gross agriculture receipts dropped over the last 5 years in Dinwiddie County. Evidence shows that full-time farms and mid-sized farms are decreasing in intensity and acreage, mid-sized, and small farms less than 50 acres are increasing. The county's number one agriculture commodity is Grains. Cotton and Peanuts are in a transition period from the years of down prices and the loss of the peanut quota program. The next largest industry is beef cattle and forage production. The production of tobacco as a cash crop has grown steadily, increased 35%, over the past five years. Dairy, sheep, swine, and peanut operations have all decreased in size.

Community and Resident Perspectives

Agriculture

Issues that surfaced during the situation analysis process were similar to needs identified by farmers to the unit ANR agent during the past five years. The results of the initial survey are ranked below:

1. Agriculture Production
2. Agriculture Marketing and Risk Management
3. Pesticide Safety, Recertification and Pest Management
4. Soil Management and Conservation
5. Water Quality
6. Livestock Production and Management
7. Agriculture Recycling
8. Forestry/Timber
9. Farm Security/bioterrorism
10. Farm Transition
11. Commercial Vegetables
12. Horticulture (urban /rural)
13. Agriculture Tourism
14. Alternative Agriculture
15. Forage Management

The survey results were then discussed with the ELC members. Members believed the overall rankings to be accurate reflections of issues facing farmers in the county. During the November 7th meeting of the ELC, members recommended that the main needs identified on the survey be categorized under larger encompassing issues. Then once the needs were grouped by their similarity, a plan for addressing the issues was developed.

Family and Community

Survey responses and key informant responses to open ended questions were very similar. The top issues were as follows in priority order:

1. Aging population/Adult Care and Effective Parenting Skills
2. Healthy Lifestyles
3. Teen Leadership Programs
4. Quality Child Day Care
5. Personal Financial Management
6. Before and After School Care and Programs
7. Nutrition
8. Household Water Quality
9. Food Safety/Preservation
10. Entrepreneurship
11. Consumer Issues

The survey results were then discussed with the ELC members. Members believed the overall rankings to be accurate reflections of issues facing residents in the county. During the November 7th meeting of the ELC, members recommended that the main needs identified on the survey be categorized under larger encompassing issues. Then once the needs were grouped by their similarity, a plan for addressing the issues was developed.

Additional survey comments:

- Would like to see the county involved more with all programs listed in order to use all resources available to mentor families within the community.
- Lots of issues on survey fall under other county agencies. These agencies should do more programs on the appropriate issues.

4-H Youth Development

The following list ranks survey and key informant responses as they relate to youth development in the county.

1. 4-H Camp
2. Camp Counselor Training
3. Youth Leadership and Development
4. Cloverbud, Junior and Senior Programs
5. Community Involvement
6. After School Programs
7. Character Building Program
8. Agriculture Program
9. 4-H Volunteer Training/Risk Management
10. Youth Behavioral, Emotional and Physical Needs
11. Environmental program
12. Youth Crisis Management
13. Shooting Sports Education
14. State Level Involvement
15. In School Programs
16. Livestock clubs/shows
17. Horse clubs/shows
18. Student Truancy Program

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Additional survey comments:

- I think 4-H camp is very important to youth in Dinwiddie because it gets you interested in 4-H and that we should strive towards in school programs to get more people involved in 4-H.
- I think Cloverbud is very important because it allows the next generation of 4 H'ers to get involved at a young age.
- 4-H at all levels is important – leadership and community involvement.
- Character building is very important with our changing society.

- We need to get more of the younger kids involved.
- Get the word out more about 4-H activities.
- Would like to see more community and school involvement in order to build the program

Priority Issues

Based on the needs assessment survey results, unit profile and resident perspectives data from above, the following top priority issues were identified for Dinwiddie County.

Issue 1: Agriculture Production

The Situation Analysis survey indicated the need for an increased emphasis to be put on Agriculture Production since Dinwiddie is such a diverse agricultural county.

Dinwiddie Extension will conduct several crop production meetings, pest management clinics, and farm business management programs for the Dinwiddie agriculture community. The office will also utilize technology (e-mail, Facebook and VCE website) where appropriate to disseminate timely information to participants. This was the top priority issue among the Agriculture Assessment surveys that were returned.

Issue 2: 4-H Camp and Counselor Training

The Situation Analysis survey indicated a need to provide Dinwiddie youth with camp programs to help with citizenship and leadership skills.

Dinwiddie Extension will explore new marketing opportunities to ensure continued growth of the Junior camp program. Teen Leadership Training will also be a priority to make sure that proper supervision is available. Dinwiddie Extension will also begin developing new specialty camp programs. This was the top priority issue among the 4-H Assessment surveys that were returned.

Issue 3: Youth Leadership & Development along with Age Level Programs (5-8 yrs, 9-13 yrs, and 14-18 yrs)

The Situation Analysis survey indicated a need to provide Dinwiddie youth with programs to develop leadership and citizenship skills.

Dinwiddie Extension will be actively involved with community events such as the Dinwiddie County Fair, Winter Wonderland Festival, and the Community Health Fair. During these events, opportunities for youth to take a lead in facilitation will be offered.

Issue 4: Agriculture Marketing and Risk Management

The Situation Analysis survey indicated a need to address the marketing of Dinwiddie agriculture and risk management.

Dinwiddie Extension will conduct production programs along with farm business management programs and farm transition meetings. The office will also utilize technology (e-mail, Facebook and VCE website) where appropriate to disseminate timely information to participants.

Issue 5: Integrated Pest Management along with Pesticide Safety and Recertification

The Situation Analysis survey indicated a need from the farmers needing to stay up to date on issues and practices as well as up to date on their pesticide recertification.

Dinwiddie Extension will continue to develop new or improved pesticide applicator training programs and farm safety education programs. The office will also utilize technology (e-mail, Facebook and VCE website) where appropriate to disseminate timely information to participants.