



Virtually Serving Rural Virginia

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Center for Rural Virginia

Annual Report to the General Assembly - Executive Summary

As a collaborative group, the Center for Rural Virginia and our partner organizations are engaged in statewide rural initiatives to influence statewide policy development on a multitude of diverse issues with special importance paid to rural as a place. A place we live and work, and a place which deserves our very best. This alliance of rural partners considers the current status, changes, and future of rural communities to provide the basis on which rural policies can be best made. Past experiences in the strategic thinking process have generated credibility and direct access in decision-making.

The collaborative is committed to developing and sharing solid, experience-based information for success and/or best practices. Current collaborative members and information resources include, but are not limited to: The Virginia Association of Counties - Rural Caucus, Virginia Economic Bridge, Inc., Virginia Municipal League, Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Virginia Housing and Community Development, Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Rural Health Association and numerous others located throughout rural areas.

The Rural Center brings both public and private partners to the table, (i.e., representatives of industry, communities and government), to address important sectors that are key to economic prosperity, to support policy needs and to raise statewide awareness about our Core Competencies which include:

- *Capital Access* – Financial sources education and promotion
- *Community Capacity* – wealth creation/retention, philanthropy, innovation and entrepreneur culture civic engagement, inclusion and leadership development
- *Education and Workforce* - youth engagement, equipping a new generation of economic leaders
- *Healthcare* -- accessible, affordable
- *Broadband Infrastructure* –true last mile, accessible, affordable
- *Agriculture and Natural Resources* – conservation, sustainable preservation and land-use planning, environmental support

The Rural Center advocates for policy and promotes strategic initiatives focused on comprehensive approaches to regional economic and civic development. The following action areas are integral to that process.

- Create networks to educate and mobilize community leaders
- Promote and lead collaborative coalitions
- Address issues for sustainable regional development
- Design comprehensive initiatives to impact areas for long term transformation.

In summary, the Centers' on-going agenda is focused on one or all of the six core competency areas at any given time with the intent to improve the quality of life and build stronger rural communities.

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Center for Rural Virginia

Mission

The Rural Center advocates for policy and promotes strategic initiatives focused on comprehensive approaches to regional economic and civic development.

Actions:

- Create networks to educate and mobilize community leaders
- Promote and lead collaborative coalitions
- Address issues for sustainable regional development
- Design comprehensive initiatives to impact areas for long term transformation.

Competencies

- *Capital Access* – Financial sources education and promotion
- *Community Capacity* – wealth creation/retention, philanthropy, innovation and entrepreneur culture civic engagement, inclusion and leadership development
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Challenge

Rural areas are limited in their ability to provide services for businesses and households for individuals have made the decision to live and work locally.

Planned Outcomes/Expectations:

- Regional and National Networks
- Continually Implement Best Practices
- Successful Programs that take into account rural community needs
- National and Regional Rural Policy Initiatives that support local initiatives
- Global Initiatives – Local impact

Locations

- Richmond** - 804-371-7141, glen.sink@cfv.org
Blacksburg - 540-231-8222 tburris@vcom.vt.edu
Southwest - Opening October 2008 tburris@vcom.vt.edu
Southside - To be announced – planning and development

Website www.cfrv.org

Newsletter – 1st edition released December 2007



Defining the Center

Collaboratively working with our partners to determine rural challenges and opportunities and develop an action plan for a positive impact on the quality of life in rural Virginia.

2008 Virginia Rural Summit - The Center's most recent event, held as a partner to the Council for Rural Virginia mobilized leaders from throughout rural Virginia to development rural policy statements for the 2009 Legislative Sessions of the General Assembly and beyond by driving the rural agenda.

Policy Positions - As a collaborative group, the Center and our partner organizations are engaged in statewide rural initiatives to influence statewide policy development on a multitude of diverse issues with special importance paid to rural as a place. A place we live and work, and one which deserves our very best. This alliance of rural partners considers the current status, changes, and future of rural communities to provide the basis on which rural policies can be best made. Past experiences in the strategic thinking process have generated credibility and direct access in the decision-making process.

Information Sharing - The collaborative is committed to developing and sharing solid, experience-based information for success and/or best practices. Current collaborative members and information resources include, but are not limited to: The Virginia Association of Counties, Rural Caucus, Virginia Economic Bridge, Inc., Virginia Municipal League, Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Virginia Housing and Community Development, Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Rural Health Association and numerous others located throughout rural areas.

Public-Private Partners - The Rural Center brings to the table representatives of industry, communities and government to address important sectors that are key to economic prosperity and to support for policy needs and to raise statewide awareness about our Core Competencies.

Ongoing agenda – the Centers' on-going agenda is focused on one or all of the six core competency areas.

Core Competencies



Innovative strategies for rural Virginians

Issues

Declining rural communities
Fewer jobs
Limited access to information and services
Out-migration of youth forcing rural Virginia to rethink the future

Solutions

Capacity to deploy financial resources
Physical and intellectual assets efficiently and effectively used
Modernization of infrastructure
Foster community viability
Community sustainability

Creating networks to be a catalyst for state and regional transformation!

Serving as an advocate for Rural Policy

Collaborative Partnership

Center for Rural Virginia and Council for Rural Virginia

- Collaborative Activities Agreement
- 'State-Federal' Partnership - - - A unique entity in Virginia
- state elected officials
- board members and leaders of partner organizations
- local elected officials and practitioners
- non-profits, regional development agencies, and other associations

Vehicle to Deliver Rural Services

State wide connecting links made up of a network of rural partners

Measuring Success

Groups and individuals impacted – Economic impact sector by sector, and how people of the community become involved and empowered as they work to bring positive economic change.

Revitalization – Creating strategies that address and manage the community's resources for a positive economic impact by using local talent with a personal investment in the community.

Building New partnerships - New partners that result from the Center's outreach to facilitate community specific projects for positive geographic impact.

Stakeholders include Government at all levels and public and private leaders from all rural areas of the Commonwealth

Over-reaching Objective

A comprehensive plan to 'Revitalize Rural Virginia'

To accomplish this objective, the Rural Center builds

- collaborative coalitions to leverage resources
- coalitions to serve as catalyst for building sustainable competitive advantages through local leaders who have 'buy-in' at the local level
- and serves as an advocate in developing rural policy positions

The Centers continual mission is to inform state and local policymakers about key challenges and best practices that will advance the economy for rural residents, through research, education, evaluation and training activities that can leverage the knowledge, skills and resources available in a network of state rural agencies.

Values

The Values of the Rural Center are:

- Have all sectors represented and everyone around the table (Minimize Silos)
- Use the best available data
- Take the strategic, global, long term view for policy development
- Recognize the key sectors that serve as community drivers to impact the local economy

In 2008

The Rural Center lead the development of the Coalition of Community Foundations (28 foundations) across the Commonwealth to expand Community Foundations into rural areas of the Virginia.

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership and the Rural Center annually leads the production of a strategic plan report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the success and status of rural sectors and programs

Congressman Boucher held a conference in Southwest Virginia which identified the reasons for the tremendous success of the Country of Ireland in the European Union and how those elements might be transferred to southwest Virginia. Two keys to their success are at work in rural Virginia – Shared and Collaboration as key elements to success.

Recently the Virginia Economic Development Partnership completed a state-level strategic assessment on Science, Technology and Enterprise Development in the Commonwealth. Points of strategic focus and recommendations –

- Private Sector Collaboration across Sectors and Disciplines,
- Public-Private Partnerships,
- Nurture Entrepreneurship and Innovation,
- Support structures to power and stimulate collaboration among public and private stakeholders.

Rural Centers' daily focus on key points for rural economic include:

- Shared resources – knowledge, contacts
- Public – private partnerships
- Collaboration among sectors
- Alliances of stakeholders
- Coalitions to expand programs and leverage resources

Vision - The Vision for Rural Center is to be a premier network builder and source of reliable information on innovative rural policy issues and best practices to help reshape state rural programs and policies as “the Unified Voice for Rural Virginia”.

The Center coalitions, as identified above, produce rural information through The Rural View, the Annual Virginia Rural Summit, the Rural Caucus and participating in local and regional rural meetings.

Shaping and re-shaping public policies or practices - The Rural Caucus continues to grow. This past General Assembly there were Caucus meetings of 20 plus rural legislators engaged. The Rural Center is actively engaged by staffing the meetings.

Center Council Business Model:

Build community capacity through collaborative coalitions, discovery and application, coordinates the alignment of existing and needed resources and stakeholders to leverage transformation

Facilitates the establishment of master plans, pilot projects, working models and measurements that can be replicated in statewide initiatives to create competitive advantages and lasting benefits for transformation

Facilitate assessment and inventory of rural resources, issues, needs and policies, against future needs and 21st century opportunities.

Engage state and local government to deliver innovative solutions and advocate for policy in Capital Access, Community Capacity, Healthcare, Education Workforce, Infrastructure Broadband and Natural Resources and Agriculture.

Build collaborative coalitions and use research and data to guide practices and policy on these major issues impacting rural transformation.

Structure: Virtual organizations functioning by a Collaborative Activities Agreement, building coalitions and partnerships

Powers and Duties of the Center as set-forth by the State: 2.2-2720 through 2.2-2724

- Develop a broad-based constituency to advocate for the interests of rural Virginia in the formulation of the Commonwealth's public policy.
- Coordinate and facilitate research on rural issues and analyze the effect of public policies and private sector interest on rural communities.
- Prepare a detailed analysis of rural Virginia economies annually for submission to the Board, together with feasible and appropriate alternatives designed to sustain economic growth in rural areas.
- Facilitate public-private investments in the infrastructure of rural Virginia
- Develop programs designed to train local elected officials and community leaders for effective leadership in rural communities.
- Foster innovative strategies that promote the development and prosperity of rural communities in the Commonwealth.
- Provide for the collection, organization, storage and dissemination of documents, data, and other information concerning issues relevant to the needs and continuous development of Virginia's areas, including technical and research assistance to rural localities in the development and implementation of their strategic plans.
- Identify potential public private resources for the Board's consideration and review that may be used to generate funds to support and facilitate the Center's work and foster the development of rural communities.
- Submit to the Board of Trustees such reports regarding the Center's work, including, but not limited to programs, activities, policy analyses and financial statements as may be requested by the board.
- Perform such other acts as may be necessary to accomplish the objectives of the Center as established in this article.

Center Board of Directors, Officers & Staff effective July 1, 2008

Chairman: Honorable Frank M. Ruff, Jr.
Vice-Chair: Honorable Steve Landes
Secretary: Honorable Jack Reasor
Treasurer: Honorable Woodrow "Woody" Harris

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Otis Brown, Longwood University - Board of Visitors
Honorable Woodrow 'Woody' Harris - City Council, Emporia, Virginia
Donna Pugh Johnson - Virginia Agribusiness Council
Honorable Joseph P. Johnson, Jr. - Virginia House of Delegates
Honorable R. Steven Landes - Virginia House of Delegates
Mark S. Lawrence - Carilion Health System
Dr. Oliver McBride - Executive Director, Crossroads Institute
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Honorable Dave Nutter - Virginia House of Delegates
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Susan Rubin - Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Coops
Honorable Frank M. Ruff, Jr. - Virginia State Senate
Honorable Edward T. 'Ed' Scott, - Virginia House of Delegates
Honorable Joseph L. Sheffey - Pulaski County Board of Supervisors
William Tucker - Farmer/member Rural Virginia Prosperity Commission

Executive Director and Staff

Glen C. Sink, Executive Director
Thelma Burris, Program Coordinator
Mary Tucker, Receptionist

Council for Rural Virginia Board of Directors

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Paul Stapleton - Superintendent, Halifax County Public Schools
Tammy Stephenson - Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
Dixie Tooke-Rawlins - Dean, Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine
William Tucker - Farmer/member Rural Virginia Prosperity Commission
Carlyle Wimbish - Virginia Association of RC&D Councils

Council Advisors

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Rebecca J. Davis, Ph.D. - National Cooperative for Health Networks (NCHN)
Steve McHenry, - Rural Maryland Council