



Virtually Serving Rural Virginia



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Executive Summary



Center for Rural Virginia ~ Report to the General Assembly

RURAL STRATEGIC ACTION

Strategic planning and a new style of rural leadership are necessary to properly assess the specific and overall issues that Virginia must address as the population both shifts and increases in the 21st Century.

The Virginia Rural Center (Center for Rural Virginia and Council for Rural Virginia), a public/private partnership representing the major rural components of the Commonwealth, is positioned to address issues of social and economic development of approximately 75% of the land area of the State and 20% of the population (all or part of 87 counties). Strategic planning and a new style of rural leadership are necessary to properly assess the specific and overall issues that Virginia must address as the population both shifts and increases in the 21st Century.

With the establishment of the Rural Strategic Planning Initiative in 2005, the Commonwealth charged the Rural Center to provide leadership in a critical statewide planning process. The Rural Center, in collaborative alliances with a broad range of organizations and planning groups that have a direct interest in Virginia's rural areas, face a unique opportunity to give leadership to the State's planning process. Rural planning has traditionally focused on the industry of agriculture or its derivatives, or in providing manufacturing employment opportunities to supplement the traditional rural agricultural farm base.

Diversification of the Commonwealth's economy must accelerate if we are to make Virginia more competitive in a knowledge-based global economy. Indeed, traditional rural areas are already facing the challenge of blending production agriculture, residential quality of life issues, and development of alternative employment opportunities in a way which will create a better environment for local economic vitality. Meeting these challenges in a way that does not diminish the uniqueness of any particular area will be a challenge. Success or failure will affect all Virginians . . . rural and urban.

Virginia is blessed with many available resources ranging from a widely acclaimed community college system, strategically located universities, and an abundance of natural resources. Over the years, Virginia has been relatively successful in blending profitable production agriculture

with business and manufacturing. However, as a number of traditional manufacturing sectors continue to shift production to offshore locations, both rural and urban areas must re-examine their own competitive advantages to determine how those advantages can best be translated into desirable job opportunities for their citizens. A good example is the recent location of a major international industry to an eastern rural county and the good job opportunities provided in a predominately rural setting.

Along with partners from numerous private and public business, organizations and agencies, the Rural Center stands ready to develop an effective Strategic Course of Action for each of the rural regions of the Commonwealth. Each regional plan must take advantage of existing resources such as colleges, natural resources, rail and road transportation and Virginia's proximity to urban areas, and each plan must incorporate agricultural production and preservation of land and water as essential elements for rural economic vitality. Also, each plan must recognize that rural Virginia's most important strategic asset is its people.

Yet, it must also be acknowledged that what has historically been viewed as an "ag-based society" no longer exists even in parts of rural Virginia. Today's rural Virginia is a mix of large scale agricultural producers, smaller "lifestyle farmers", residents who are employed locally in small business and light manufacturing, and residents who commute to population centers for employment. Each group of citizens has different needs, wants and expectations. The creation of a Strategic Course of Action for Rural Virginia provides a unique opportunity to comprehensively examine issues surrounding "the quality of life that is uniquely Virginia" from the point of view of every stakeholder. Our findings will provide a roadmap leading to more vibrant and sustainable rural economies in every region of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth must address the various issues facing Virginia's rural areas, identify those that can be altered or improved, while identifying rural economic essentials and attributes that should become sustainable and should be preserved. To do so requires that a statewide rural **Strategic Course of Action (SCA)** be created and used as the planning guide for the Commonwealth. Specifically, the SCA can and must address the following key issues:

The impact of jobs, workforce training and economic development.

1. The need for quality secondary education across all of Virginia specifically underserved rural areas.
2. How to reinvigorate community and civic leadership in rural areas to offset the out-migration of young leaders to urban and suburban settings.
3. Access of acceptable and necessary healthcare services in parts of rural Virginia.
4. Resource development that includes all aspects of community life in rural areas.
5. The need to support the creation of sustainable systems for natural resources, agriculture and energy production and consumption.
6. The importance of enhancing and preserving livable spaces, the traditional rural quality of life, and the countryside's open space for future generations.

Virginia is fortunate to have 95 counties, 36 independent cities and dozens of towns large and small located in every corner of the Commonwealth. The pride in each community transcends economic and cultural boundaries. Yet, more than at any time in at least four decades, the Commonwealth is faced with limited resources, increased demand for quality services and a highly mobile population. Services, be they state or local, public or private, must be delivered more efficiently in the future. The Center for Rural Virginia recognizes our commission to facilitate those very tasks!

As an organization whose state and federal Charter mandates stakeholder coordination and collaboration, the Rural Center is uniquely positioned to determine how best to meet the increasing demands for service, both on a local and regional basis. All rural areas of Virginia are not alike! The Rural Center will provide the leadership and expertise to challenge each region to reexamine itself and determine its own strengths and weaknesses. Equally important, a number of state agencies, educational institutions and community organizations with whom the Rural Center currently partners are stakeholders in this vision. It is incumbent upon ‘all’ who have a stake in the future of Rural Virginia to identify ways to gain the very best for our citizens.

There is no good time to change . . . Change is difficult. Change can be uncomfortable. But, with respect to Rural Virginia, change we must! No longer can we address rural issues by solely focusing on production agriculture; nor, can we ignore the effect that “suburbanization” is having on the quality of life held dear by generations of Virginians. Changing for change sake is not the answer . . . Change must come in the form of bold, innovative and visionary thinking. The best way to facilitate that kind of thinking is to create a **Strategic Course of Action for Rural Virginia**.

Citizens in the rural areas of the Commonwealth want to believe that Rural Virginia’s best and most productive days are ahead. The Commonwealth’s leaders recognize that a dynamic Rural Virginia is a vibrant and vital Rural Virginia. Thus, this strategic plan will provide the roadmap to make that possible.

It is imperative that the next Governor create a new vision for Rural Virginia . . . One that leverages the unique quality of life which exists in rural areas as a tool to create more employment and greater business opportunities. Virginians will continue to demand the level of personal and community services that they should have. Conversely, while government can certainly never be “all things to all people”, it is important that state, local and community leaders understand and appreciate what its citizens need and demand. That is why the creation of a comprehensive **Strategic Course of Action for Rural Virginia** must be viewed as a critical business imperative for the Commonwealth.

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Center for Rural Virginia

Mission

The Rural Center advocates for policy and promotes strategic initiatives focused on a comprehensive approach to regional economic and civic development as it relates to rural areas of Virginia.

Leadership

Center leadership is cognizant of the challenges and the opportunities facing rural regions, and of the need to leverage resources to meet economic and social needs in those regions. Guided by the Center's six Economic Essentials, board, staff and our partners invest in rural environments, rural people, businesses, and communities to maximize local capacity.

Accepting the Challenge



Building partnerships, developing networks and promoting communication among stakeholders guides the collaborative efforts between the Center and partner networks. Our focus is on bringing together rural leaders, public and private business, organizations, local, regional, state and federal government leaders and individuals who advocate for and understand the value of sound decision making. This alliance considers current and future needs in the strategic thinking process and how to plan for growth and revitalization. The Rural Center's Strategic Action Plan directs attention to the development of a framework to address the challenges faced by all rural areas. The overarching strategy is to be a model for rural transformation, to reduce the gap between rural and urban, to promote prudent use of resources and bring rural communities together to plan for economic vitality and sustainability.

Va Rural Center 2008-2009 Accomplishments

Although not all inclusive, the following list includes some of the Rural Centers major accomplishments from July 2008 – June 2009.

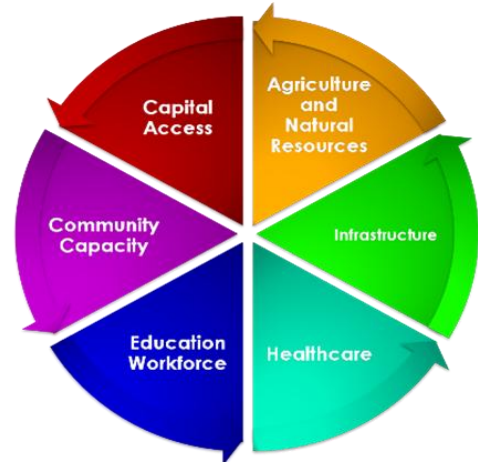
- Created a ***Bi-partisan Leadership Forum*** to convene and assess rural policies and issues at the Rural Summit and at rural events.
- Developed the capacity to inform and engage community groups and leaders on Broadband issues through the ***Broadband Coalition***.
- Promoted and supported a ***Coalition of Partners*** to join with the Virginia Library Association/Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to expand Broadband capabilities to Virginia's Public Libraries.

- Engaged with and Leading an **Energy Coalition** to build a network of energy related organizations to develop and promote policies for rural development through energy systems.
- Supported/participated with the **Rural Healthcare Coalition** in the development of the Virginia Rural Health Plan. Promoted increased **Healthcare recognition** on Economic Development agendas for the Commonwealth.
- Lead in the creation of a **Virginia Community Foundation Association** to further enhance and promote the establishment and expansion of Community foundations into rural and un-served areas of the Commonwealth.
- Established a **Model Plan and creation of a Strategic Course of Action** for Rural Virginia by the new Administration's Economic Development Plan.
- Represent the **Rural Center's Economic Essentials** (six sectors of a healthy community) and (five rural regions of the Commonwealth) as the overarching guide for Virginia's Strategic Course of Action.
- Continue to build **Networks and Coalitions** to promote and enhance the economy and policies of rural Virginia.
- Facilitated the **Virginia Rural Caucus and Regional Rural Caucuses** in the five rural regions of Virginia as a vehicle to engage local and state elected leaders in a dialogue about issues relative to their particular region
- Lead rural Virginia in the formation of sound **Policy Positions for the Commonwealth**.
- Plan and present a stellar 2009 **Virginia Rural Summit**.

Va Rural Center	Website	Newsletter
	www.cfrv.org <u>Leadership</u>	<i>The Rural View</i>  ©
2009 Virginia Rural Summit <hr/> <i>The Spirit of Rural Virginia</i> <i>New Strategies ~ New Solutions</i> <u>Summit Agenda</u>	Rural Caucus Takes place weekly during the Virginia General Assembly	Regional Rural Caucus <hr/> <i>Currently on-going in Rural Regions of the Commonwealth</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Rural Collaborative - Coalition of Partners</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A community based alliance purposed to advance and sustain development in rural areas of the Commonwealth.</p> <p>Council for Rural Virginia, Center for Rural Virginia, Virginia Economic Bridge, Inc., Virginia Association of Counties Rural Caucus, Virginia Municipal League, Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development, Virginia Community College System, Weldon Cooper Center</p>		

Rural Center - Economic Essentials

Areas for attention in rural Virginia - Studies have been done and numerous discussions held about the Rural Center's six Economic Essentials. Can they be combined, do we need them all? The final conclusion: All six areas are equally important, essential to the economy and they feed one upon the other; therefore, they stand to be addressed as a unit and one-on-one.



Education systems - Rural Virginia must have an education system (pre-school to adulthood) that develop and expand the knowledge and capacity of rural people and communities, providing a return to the economy through increased productivity and wealth generation.

Infrastructure systems - Rural Virginia must have an infrastructure system that develops and promotes community renewal through job creation and retention, housing, education, access to local and global markets and health care to provide a comprehensive set of resources to grow and expand the economy.

Economic Development and Capital Access systems - Economic and financial systems that provide for increased jobs, business development and retention, entrepreneurial opportunities through coordinated resources to foster community growth.

- Capital access that supports entrepreneurial activities, small business development and enterprise growth.
- Capital service that assist entrepreneurs, businesses and government with managing debt, building credit and wealth.

Community Capacity - Local capacity that alters the trends and conditions fostering the advancement of people and communities to become self-sufficient and self-sustaining by developing local networks and partnerships with a commitment to the future of rural Virginia.

Healthcare - Healthcare infrastructure, practitioners and delivery systems of service to current and emerging rural communities that contributes to healthy people. People who will lead, participate and support development, business growth and build capacity in local communities.

Agriculture and Natural Resource – Ag/Natural Resource systems that promote sustainable growth and production of food, fiber, energy and the environment to serve a growing population. Further, one that enhances the wealth and welfare of citizens of the Commonwealth!

Collaboratively working with our partners – Through rural outreach, Rural Center staff identifies challenges and opportunities. An action plan is developed to define who can and will have an impact, where to look for resources, how to proceed and how can a newly formed network impact on the quality of life in a given situation. With the need determined, resources identified, and a local collaborative in place, we look to strong local leaders to carry the project.

2009 Virginia Rural Summit – The Rural Center’s most recent event, mobilized leaders from throughout rural Virginia to address three of our Economic Essentials.

1. **Financial Systems** – Access to Capital
Strategic Course of Action – How to achieve this vision – What is the role of Rural?
2. **Energy Systems – Vision: Energy for the Commonwealth**
Strategic Course of Action – How to achieve this vision – What is the role of Rural?
3. **Food and Natural Resource Systems**
Strategic Course of Action – How to achieve this vision – What is the role of Rural?

Policy Positions resulting from the annual rural Summit - Developing rural policy statements around the Economic Essentials for the 2010 Virginia General Assembly is underway. The Center and our partners are engaged in statewide initiatives to promote policy on issues of importance to *rural as a place*. This alliance considers the current status, changes, and the future of rural communities to provide the basis on which to base rural policies.

Information Sharing – Virginia’s rural collaborative is committed to developing, collecting and sharing solid, experience based information. Collaborative members who serve as a resource include: The Virginia Association of Counties-Rural Caucus, Virginia Municipal League, Virginia Economic Bridge, Inc., Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Virginia Housing and Community Development, Virginia Community College System, Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Rural Health Association, Weldon Cooper Center and numerous others.

Strength of Public-Private Partnerships - The Rural Center has a strong network of partners in business and industry, government at all levels-local, regional, state and federal and individuals who support our state-wide rural efforts.

Strength of State Wide Network – A strong state wide rural network is the connecting links to move Virginia’s rural agenda.

Strength in Building New partnerships – Building new partners is a daily benefit of serving Virginia’s rural regions.

Strategy – On going strategy includes, assessing rural needs and opportunities - now and for the future, and advocating for resources to positively impact each situation.

This is done by engaging state and local government in the process of finding solutions and advancing policy in: Capital Access, Community Capacity, Healthcare, Education Workforce, Infrastructure and Agriculture and Natural Resource, the Rural Center’s six Economic Essentials.

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.
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- 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 for Rural Virginia

Center Chair: Honorable Frank M. Ruff, Jr.

Vice Chair: Honorable Steve Landes

Secretary: Honorable Jack Reasor

Treasurer: Honorable Woodrow Harris

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Carlyle Wimbish

Advisors

Sharon Colbert, USDA Rural Development Desk Officer, Washington, DC

Rebecca J. Davis, Ph.D., National Cooperative for Health Networks (NCHN)

Steve McHenry, Rural Maryland Council

New Strategies - New Solutions
The Spirit of Rural Virginia



<p>Va Rural Center</p> <p>Visit us on the web</p> <p>www.cfrv.org</p>	<p>Richmond</p> <p>600 East Main St. Suite 300 Richmond, VA 23219 Phone: 804-371-7141 Fax: 804-371-7092</p> <p>Blacksburg</p> <p>2265 Kraft Drive Blacksburg, VA Phone: 540-231-8222 Fax: 540-231-5338</p> <p>Wytheville</p> <p>1000 East Main Street Wytheville, VA 24382 Phone: 276-223-4805</p>	<p><u>Executive Director</u></p> <p>Glen C. Sink glen.sink@cfrv.org</p> <p><u>Director/Southwest</u></p> <p>Thelma Burris tburris@vcom.vt.edu</p>
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Economic & Social Essentials

Community Capacity

People , Government and Business
Building Networks
Shared Skills & Resources
Finding solutions to issues
Strengthen organizations
Building Regions

Education

Pre K-12
Community College
Voc/Tech Schools
Higher Ed Centers
Colleges & Universities

Healthcare

State Rural Health Plan
Access
Workforce
Quality
Data

Natural Resources

Agriculture Systems
Land Use
Food Systems
Energy Systems
Environments

Infrastructure

Communications/Broadband
Transportation
Energy Systems
Housing
Water/Sewer

Economic Development Capital Access

Jobs
Entrepreneurs
Business, Governments
Capital Access
Capital Services

Virginia's Rural Strategic Action is designed around the Rural Center's Six Economic Essentials, the partner list is a work in process. An organizational meeting was held September 15, 2009.



Strategic Rural Partners

Steering Committee - Leadership Teams

Community Capacity

Woody Harris & Ellen Davis

VA Dept. Commerce and Trade
 VA Department of Technology
 Virginia Department of Education
 VA Community College System
 Universities and Colleges
 VA Dept. Housing and Community Develop
 Virginia Economic Bridge
 VA Employment Commission
 Virginia Community Foundations
 VA Department of Business Assistance
 UVA Weldon Cooper Center
 VA Association of Counties
 VA Municipal League
 Virginia Planning Districts
 VA and Local Chamber of Commerce
 VA Economic Development Partnership

Education

Paul Stapleton & Oliver McBride

VA Department of Education
 Superintendent of Public Instruction
 Virginia Community College Systems
 Technical and Vocational Centers
 Higher Education Centers
 Colleges and Universities
 Workforce and Occupational Centers
 Virginia Economic Bridge

Capital Access & Economic Development

Gary Christie & Basil Gooden

VA Department of Commerce and Trade
 Virginia Economic Development Partnership
 VA Department of Housing and Community Development
 Virginia Resource Authority
 Virginia Development Housing Authority
 Virginia Bankers Association
 VA Economic Developers Association
 USDA Rural Development
 Virginia Economic Bridge
 VA Economic Development Partnership
 VA Extension Leadership Council
 Va Farm Credit Association

Infrastructure

Bryan David & Dee Walton

VA Department of Technology
 VA Department of Commerce and Trade
 VA Department of Transportation
 VA Department of Environmental Quality
 Center for Innovative Technology
 Virginia Broadband Coalition and Roundtable
 VA Energy Coalition
 VA Department of Mines Minerals and Energy
 VA Dept. Housing and Community Development
 USDA Rural Development
 Virginia Economic Development Partnership
 Virginia Tobacco Commission
 VA Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Jay Poole & Joe Sheffey

VA Dept. Ag and Consumer Services
 VA Food System Council
 VA Energy Coalition
 VA Dept. Mines, Minerals and Energy
 Virginia Agribusiness Council
 Virginia Farm Bureau
 Colleges and Universities
 USDA Farm Service Agency
 VA Dept. Environmental Equality
 VA Dept. Conservation and Recreation
 USDA Rural Development

Healthcare

Ward Stevens & Laurie Moran

VA Dept. Health and Human Services
 Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine
 VCU Medical Systems
 UVA Health Systems
 Virginia Rural Health Association
 Virginia Rural Health Resource Center
 Virginia Tele-health Association
 UVA Dental School
 UVA Wise - Graduate Medical Ed. Center
 VA Community College System
 Nat. Rural Health Association
 Nat. Org. of State Offices of Rural Health
 Federal Office of Rural Health Policy
 Virginia Economic Bridge
 USDA Rural Development
 VA Primary Care Association
 Virginia Joint Commission on Healthcare