



Rural Center

Partnership of the Center for Rural
Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia

2014-2015

Center for Rural Virginia

Annual Report

Our Mission

To work with policymakers and stakeholders to create innovative solutions and expand entrepreneurial opportunities to ensure economic prosperity for all regions of the Commonwealth.

Our History

Created by the General Assembly in 2004, the Center for Rural Virginia works to advance economic development, job creation, workforce development, education, infrastructure, healthcare and other vital initiatives for the prosperity of rural Virginia.

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July 1, 2014 – July 1, 2015

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Dear Friends,

Thank you to our many partners for working with us to make the 2014-2015 operating year of the Center for Rural Virginia a success focusing on initiatives aimed at increasing economic prosperity across rural communities. During this year, the Center has focused on continuing its role to serve as an advocator, facilitator and producer of projects, programs and collaborative initiatives to enhance rural prosperity. The Center has also continued its focus on advocacy and initiatives around priority program areas including leadership and community capacity; education and workforce development; access to quality and specialty healthcare; broadband and infrastructure; entrepreneurship and small business; and regional assets and opportunities.

The Center embarked on several new partnerships this year to heighten the focus on rural economic development. These partnerships include two in particular that have been very successful. Partnering with the Administration to launch the *Governor's Summit for Rural Prosperity, hosted by the Virginia Rural Center*, has been a great success and has increased participation and interest in the rural summit while bringing together Administration officials, legislators, agency representatives, community leaders and stakeholders. Another new partnership started during this period was with USDA Rural Development. Through a Cooperative Services Agreement, the Center launched a project to review Agricultural Development Boards across the state and country and create a guide for communities interested in starting or reinvigorating an ADB to increase agricultural economic development in their locality or region.

Through partnerships and collaborative projects, the Center continues to work to ensure rural prosperity for all areas of the Commonwealth. Rural Virginia encompasses most of the geographical area of the state and produces many vital products enjoyed across Virginia, the country and the globe through increased economic development and trade. Rural communities are growing through collaboration, entrepreneurship and innovation in various sectors drawn to the scenic beauty, quality of life and skilled workforce that employers desire for their companies and employees.

You will find enclosed a detailed summary of activities for the year. It has been a great honor to work and meet with many of you as I traveled the state visiting rural communities throughout Virginia. It is the dedication and hard work of our board members that make the impact of the Center for Rural Virginia possible. I look forward to another stellar year of innovation, collaboration and new initiatives to promote and enhance rural Virginia.

Best regards,

Christy T. Morton

Christy T. Morton

Organizational Structure

Executive Director

The 2014-2015 operational year of the Center was the first full year for the new Executive Director, who took the opportunity to review the organization's structure, bylaws, collective services agreement, operational practices and other guiding documentation. Two subcommittees focusing on the budget and governance structure were formed from within the board to review governance documents and the budgeting process and goals. Revisions to the bylaws and collective services agreement were approved by the board at the March 31, 2015 board meeting in Charlottesville. These organizational reviews were beneficial to both staff and the board to set goals and operational guidance moving forward.

Collective Services Agreement

The Center for Rural Virginia currently operates in a collaborative partnership with the Council for Rural Virginia through a collective services agreement as the Virginia Rural Center. The two organizations operate independently, but share an Executive Director and operate in conjunction to fulfill their joint mission of economic prosperity for rural communities throughout Virginia.

The Center for Rural Virginia is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization established by the Virginia General Assembly in 2004. The creation of the Center was a recommendation of the Rural Prosperity Commission, created by the General Assembly in 2000. The goal of the Commission was "Prosperity for all Virginians". The 18-member Commission was instructed by the General Assembly to "undertake a detailed analysis of rural Virginia economies and recommend flexible but targeted state policies which, combined with local efforts, will help foster sustainable economic growth in Virginia's rural areas."

The final report of the Rural Prosperity Commission was issued in December 2001 and featured specific policy recommendations, including the creation of the Center for Rural Virginia to address the obstacles and capitalize on the many opportunities of Rural Virginia. In 2004, founding board members Senator Frank Ruff and Delegate Steve Landes, sponsored the enabling legislation, creating the Center.

The 21-member board of the Center for Rural Virginia works in partnership with the 21-member board of the Council for Rural Virginia. The Council is a designated State Rural Development Council associated with the National Rural Development Partnership, created out of the 2002 Farm Bill.

The Council is a member of Partners for Rural America, whose mission is to support the efforts of its member State Rural Development Councils (SRDC's), which are uniquely positioned:

- To expand economic and social opportunities for America’s rural communities and their residents;
- To promote equal treatment of rural America by government agencies and the private sector;
- To provide a collective voice for rural America.

Together, the Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia work with federal, state and local policymakers and regulators as well private sector stakeholders to improve economic opportunities and preserve the quality life throughout rural Virginia.

Institutional Partners

In addition to the support of the Virginia General Assembly and the Governor’s Office, the Virginia Rural Center enjoys partnerships with two other entities that make the daily operations of the Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia efficient, effective and successful.

The first is the Department of Housing and Community Development. DHCD provides office space and back office assistance that enhances the productivity, accessibility to stakeholders in the Capital region and partnership opportunities that enrich the work the Center is able to conduct.

The second is the Edward Via School of Osteopathic Medicine in Blacksburg. The Virginia Rural Center’s partnership with VCOM, through the Council for Rural Virginia, provides assets and operational efficiencies that greatly enhance the cost effective operation for both entities of the Virginia Rural Center.

Project Overview & Status Updates

During the 2014-2015 operating year of the Virginia Rural Center, the collective organization and its individual entities have entered into several projects, partnerships and initiatives that will enhance the Center's work in rural communities throughout the Commonwealth.

- The Virginia Rural Center embarked on a new partnership for the 2014 Rural Summit that created new opportunities to heighten the focus on rural Virginia and the issues and opportunities it faces. The VRC partnered with the Governor's office, creating the *Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity, hosted by the Virginia Rural Center*.
 - This 2014 *Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity, hosted by the Virginia Rural Center* was held in November 2014 at the Hotel Roanoke.
 - The event brought together Administration officials, members of the Virginia General Assembly, local government representatives, private business leaders and other stakeholders committed to rural prosperity across Virginia.
 - Speakers and Panelists included:
 - Lunch & Featured Conversation with Special Guests
 - Welcome: The Honorable Frank M. Ruff, Jr., Senate of Virginia
 - Moderator: Joe Jones, Director of External Affairs, Appalachian Power Company
 - Panelists: The Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr., Senate of Virginia; The Honorable Todd Haymore, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry; The Honorable Maurice Jones, Secretary of Commerce and Trade; The Honorable R. Steven Landes, Virginia House of Delegates
 - Creating and Sustaining Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Rural Virginia
 - Moderator: Shannon Blevins, Director of Economic Development, UVAWise
 - Panelists: Larry Simpson, President / CEO, The Alvarez Group; Chris Cook, Executive Director, VAFAIRS; Jim Flowers, Executive Director, VT KnowledgeWorks
 - Investing in Rural Virginia's Infrastructure
 - Moderator: Basil Gooden, USDA Virginia State Director, USDA Rural Programs
 - Panelists: Tim Hassler, Principal, Advantage Capital Partners; Andrew Jacob, Executive Vice President, CoBank; Al Puchala, Chief Executive Officer, Capitol Peak Asset Management; Tad Deriso, President, Mid-Atlantic Broadband Corporation
 - Community and Regional Economic Development Programming
 - Moderator: Conaway Haskins, Executive Director, Virginia Community Economic Network
 - Panelists: Ken McFadyen, Regional Director, Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority; Ken Heath, Director of Community and Economic Development, Town of Marion; Marcowitz, Executive Director, Staunton Downtown Development Association

- Dinner with special guest The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor of Virginia
 - Introduction: The Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr., Senate of Virginia
 - Breakfast with The Honorable Karen Jackson, Secretary of Technology
 - Creating a 21st Century Workforce
 - Moderator: Elizabeth Creamer, Advisor for Workforce Development, Office of the Secretary of Commerce and Trade
 - Panelists: Gary Larrowe, County Administrator, Carroll County; Angeline Godwin, President, Patrick Henry Community College; Sharon Johnson, CEO, Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board
 - Entrepreneurs in Action: Rural Businesses Thriving
 - Moderator: Eva Doss, President and CEO, The Launch Place
 - Panelists: Diane Flynt, Owner, Foggy Ridge Cider; Joep Paternostre, President, Bloomaker, Inc.; Travis Croxton, Owner, Rappahannock River Oysters, LLC; Sarah Baldwin, President, New Ravenna Mosaics
 - Concluding Remarks, Bryan David, Vice Chair, Council for Rural Virginia
- The Virginia Rural Center organized and staffed weekly meetings of the Virginia General Assembly's Rural Caucus.
 - During the 2015 Virginia General Assembly Session, the Rural Caucus met weekly to discuss legislative issues of interest to rural Virginia as well as hear from Cabinet members, stakeholders and other with valuable information to share.
 - Speakers included:
 - The Honorable Todd Haymore, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry
 - The Honorable Karen Jackson, Secretary of Technology
 - The Honorable Maurice Jones, Secretary of Commerce and Trade
 - The Honorable Aubrey Lane, Secretary of Transportation

A matrix of priority legislation was developed by the Caucus and tracked by the Center, providing updated information on each piece of legislation on a weekly basis.
 - During the 2015 General Assembly Session, the Virginia Rural Center and the Virginia Association of Counties partnered to host the Annual Rural Caucus Reception and Dinner.
 - The Annual Rural Caucus Dinner was held in February 2015, at the Marriot Hotel in Downtown Richmond during the Virginia General Assembly Session.
 - Over 175 attendees from the Administration, General Assembly, local government and private business attended.
 - The program consisted of a featured conversation between Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam and Delegate Keith Hodges. Council for Rural Virginia Vice Chairman Bryan David moderated the conversation.
 - It was a successful event bringing together rural local government leaders with rural state government officials to provide the opportunity for information and idea sharing amongst the largest audience in the event's history.

- The Virginia Rural Center was awarded a Cooperative Services Agreement grant project from USDA Rural Development to conduct a review of Agricultural Development Boards (ADB), create a final ADB guide and conduct regional workshops to teach local officials how to create or reinvigorate a ADB in their community.
 - VRC worked with Matsen Consulting, VA FAIRS, the Virginia Department of Agriculture, USDA and others to conduct research and create the guide.
 - This project began in the fall of 2014 and is scheduled to be completed in early 2016.

- Broadband continues to be a priority issue for the Virginia Rural Center and rural communities across the Commonwealth. During the 2015 General Assembly session, the Center for Rural Virginia worked on legislation related to a restructure of the Broadband Advisory Council as well as changes to the Center for Innovative Technology.
 - The Executive Director of the Center for Rural Virginia was added to the Broadband Advisory Council as an ex-officio member.
 - Two rural seats were added to the Center for Innovative Technology Board of Directors and the Speaker of the House appointed the Executive Director of the Center for Rural Virginia to the CIT board.
 - The involvement of the Virginia Rural Center in these organizations will help to bring the importance of rural broadband and technology development issues to the forefront of discussion and activity.

- The Center for Rural Virginia was awarded a Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission (TRRC) grant in 2013 to conduct a strategic plans assessment project within the nine planning district commissions of the TRRC footprint.
 - The purpose of the project was to provide an assessment of economic development strategies with the region to assist the TRRC as they work to update their strategic plan and make funding decisions moving forward.
 - The project was a recommendation of JLARC in their 2011 report to provide detailed information to the TRRC to better align priorities and investments between the communities and the Commission.
 - The Center conducted focus group meetings within the nine PDCs with representatives from local government, private business, educational institutions and state and local policy makers.
 - An analysis of the strategic plans, economic development strategies and priority sectors was conducted to provide feedback and was provided to the TRRC to assist with aligning strategies, investments and priorities moving forward.
 - The final report was submitted to the Commission in April 2015 and can be accessed on the VRC website at www.cfrv.org.

- Joint Commission on Healthcare– Rural Health Working Group
 - The Joint Commission on Health Care asked the Virginia Rural Center to form a Rural Health Working Group to bring together stakeholders to identify the challenges to quality rural healthcare and propose recommendations to address those challenges

- and expand upon opportunities to increase access to quality and specialty healthcare in rural areas of the Commonwealth.
- The majority of the work for this initiative will take place during the 2015-2016 operational year of the Virginia Rural Center.
 - The Virginia Rural Center held its first meeting of the workgroup in the Spring of 2015.
- One of the two operating entities of the Virginia Rural Center, the Council for Rural Virginia, is a member of Partners for Rural Virginia (PRA).
 - PRA is the national organization of State Councils for Rural Development, authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill.
 - The Executive Director of the Virginia Rural Center was elected Secretary of the national PRA organization and is serving on the Rural Futures Committee.
 - The Executive Director attended the 2014 Annual Meeting in Wyoming and had the opportunity to learn about the work of their rural council and rural development initiatives.
 - PRA asked the Virginia Rural Center to host their 2015 Annual Meeting in August 2015, which will take place in the Shenandoah Valley.
 - The Virginia Rural Center Executive Director is serving on the newly formed State Policy Panel of the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI). The State Policy Panel consists of 14 professionals from across the country that works in rural economic development, rural research and rural policy development.
 - Participation in the panel is providing opportunities to learn from other states through access to a network for the sharing of best practices from across the country.
 - The Executive Director serves on the Innovations Subcommittee and the Broadband Subcommittee of the RUPRI State Policy Panel.

Leadership

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Shannon Fedors, Director – Marketing Business Partner, Riverside Walter Reed Hospital

Katie Frazier, President, Virginia Agribusiness Council

Ron Jefferson, Manager of External Affairs, APCo

Honorable Todd Haymore, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry

Honorable Maurice Jones, Secretary of Commerce and Trade

Oliver McBride, Executive Director, The Crossroads Institute

Honorable J. Randall Minchew, Member, Virginia House of Delegates

Dale Moore, Founder and President, Moore's Electrical and Mechanical

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Jay Poole, Owner, Common Sense Strategies

Wayne Pryor, President, Virginia Farm Bureau

Honorable Frank M. Ruff, Jr., Member, Senate of Virginia

Honorable Edward T. Scott, Member, Virginia House of Delegates

Richard Settle, President, Settle & Associates

Bill Tucker, Owner, Tucker Family Farms

Morgan Wright, Wood Preservers

Greg White, President & CEO, Northern Neck Electric Cooperative

Andrew Whitley, Political Consultant

In partnership with

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W. Neal Menefee, The Rockingham Group

Oliver McBride, The Crossroads Institute

John Meade, The First Bank and Trust Company

Carl Mitchell, Virginia Tech College of Engineering

Gail Moody, Southside Planning District Commission

Laurie Moran, Danville Pittsylvania Chamber of Commerce

Curry Roberts, Fredericksburg Regional Alliance

Robin Sullenberger, Shenandoah Valley Partnership

Emmett Toms, The Valley-Center-Southside-Alleghany Highland Regions, Dominion

Bill Tucker, Tucker Family Farms

Dee Walton, Virginia Telecommunications Industry Association

Brian T. Warner, Rolls Royce

Carlyle Wimbish, Virginia Association of RC&D Councils



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The 2014-2015 Center for Rural Virginia Report can
be accessed at

www.cfrv.org

