



Situation Analysis Report

Bedford

2018

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Introduction

The Bedford unit conducted a situation analysis during the calendar year 2018. The situation analysis process, conducted by unit staff in consultation with key stakeholders and VCE volunteers involved reviewing data from the Unit Profile as well as gathering community and resident perspectives on issues in the county. Data and information from these two activities were analyzed and priority issues were identified.

Unit Profile

Bedford Town/County is located in the central part of Virginia. The County encompasses 754 square miles, making Bedford the 5th largest county in land area. The close proximity to two relatively large cities (Lynchburg on the east and Roanoke on the west) and a growing recreational and retirement area at Smith Mountain Lake has led to an increasing population that is on average older and more affluent. Many local attractions including the Blue Ridge Parkway, Peaks of Otter, National D-Day Memorial, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, and Smith Mountain Lake have made Bedford County a tourist destination.

Many of the aspects in the unit profile show similar trends to past analyses. The population continues to grow; however, the rate of growth is reduced compared with earlier time periods.

The total population for the service area is 83,476 individuals where 49% of the population is male and 51% is female. The median age is 45.6 years in Bedford County and 43 years in the town of Bedford. Approximately 19% of the service area population is 65 years of age or older which is higher than those 65 years of age or older living in Virginia as whole (13.9%). The increase in older age groups leads to questions about health care, lifestyle issues, and senior recreation activities in the county.

More individuals living in Bedford County are White (88.4%) as compared to those living in the town of Bedford (76.7%); fewer in the County are Black (6.9%) compared to those in the town of Bedford (20.7%); and slightly more are Hispanic or Latino in the County (2.0%) as compared to those in the town of Bedford (1.0%).

The median household income in Bedford County is \$56,725 and in the town of Bedford is \$39,971. Bedford households have a higher median income than many adjoining localities but lags behind the state average (\$66,149).

Approximately 39% of the population lives at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level in the town of Bedford as compared to 24.9% in the County and 26.6% in Virginia. More than two times more seniors 65 years of age and over live below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level in the town of Bedford (16.1%) as compared to the county (7.0%) and the Commonwealth (7.6%).

Of the public school-aged children in the service area, 37.3% (3,660) are eligible for free and reduced lunches as compared to 44.31% of children in the Commonwealth. However, nine of the twenty schools in the district have free and reduced lunch rates greater than 50%.

Approximately 32.0% of children living in the Bedford service area live at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty as compared to 34.0% in Virginia which is an estimated 5,121 children.

Unemployment rates continue to decrease in the service area and although they are slightly higher (3.9%) compared to the rate in Virginia (3.8%) they are lower than the rate of 4.4% in the United States. In the service area, of the population age 25 and over, educational attainment is 11.6% for less than high school graduate; 30.6% for high school graduate or equivalency; 30.3% for some college or Associate's Degree; and 27.5% for Bachelor's Degree or Higher. These rates are in line with the rates for the Commonwealth as a whole. Top employment sectors are manufacturing, health services and government.

As a component to the Bedford Health Needs Assessment Study, respondents were asked which, if any, health issues had they been diagnosed with. Top responses included high blood pressure (34%), depression (33%), obesity (31%), high cholesterol (15%) and diabetes (14%). Diet and lifestyle choices affect health and well-being, as do food safety policies and practices. Providing education concerning diet, health issues and nutrition is key to well-being of young families as well as the elderly.

Agriculture and natural resource industries are important sources of economic activity in Bedford County. Agriculture and Forestry is by far the largest land use in the County. According to the U.S. Census of Agriculture data, Bedford County ranks in the top ten among Virginia counties in beef cattle, horses, goats and hay production and generates \$23,647,000 annually in farm sales. According to a recently completed study by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, the total economic impact of agriculture and forestry in Bedford (includes secondary multiplier effects) was \$135,731,096 and the combined industries accounted for 2,889 jobs.

Bedford lost farms and acres in farmland from 2007-2012 (the most recent period for which data are available). Land values have increased dramatically from 2002-2012 (\$2,920.00 to \$4,430.00). The average age of the farmer remained at 59 from 2002-2012. However, the number of farmers 65 years or older increased during this time frame. This combined with the fact that less young farmers are entering agriculture leads to concerns with regard to where the next generation of farmers will come from. There has been a decrease in traditional farming enterprises such as dairy and orchards; however, non-traditional agriculture enterprises including horses, nursery greenhouse and wine grapes are on the rise.

Community and Resident Perspectives

To assess resident perspectives, our unit utilized a number of strategies. We strive to continually assess needs through informal means as our staff interacts with the community. Specific and intentional efforts include the following:

- Input was solicited from the Bedford County Board of Supervisors.
- An additional source of information that was key to our analysis was a Health Needs Assessment conducted by the Centra Medical Group with partnership from the Bedford Community Health Foundation.
- As a component of a re-organization of our local Beef Producers Association, a survey was developed to identify program needs.

A trend identified in the responses illustrate that many of the top issues are linked and interdisciplinary. Economic development, community planning, chronic health management, youth life skill development, environment, and land use are important issues in Bedford. VCE can provide expertise in addressing aspects of these top issues that cut across age and program area. With our history of interdisciplinary and regional programming, coupled with our capacity at grassroots community partnership development, VCE is uniquely positioned to respond to these complex issues at the local level.

Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and community perspectives data from above, the following priority issues were identified for Bedford County.

Profitable Agriculture and Natural Resource Production (Sustainability, Farm Transition, Marketing, Crisis Management, Local Food Systems):

Description: Bedford has a strong agricultural industry generating approximately 28 million dollars in cash receipts annually (2012 U.S. Agriculture Census). However, many challenges threaten the viability and sustainability of agriculture including residential growth, farm profitability, the increasing age of agricultural producers, and more recently the impact of depressed financial farm conditions on the mental health of producers and their families. Issues directly related to the agriculture community identified through the situation analysis and by stakeholders include crisis management, farm transition and profitability, business planning, and dealing with a changing environment. In a climate of rising input costs, static or declining commodity prices, and a changing environment, producers need relevant and timely information in order to make well informed decisions.

Issue Status: This issue is being addressed by VCE resources. Examples include individual consultations and educational programs on agricultural Best Management Practices; coordinating the Bedford value added cattle marketing project, which has increased income for participating producers; supporting our local farmer's markets; and securing grant funds from the Virginia Tobacco Commission for regional agri-business initiatives. The creation of the Bedford County Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board, on which VCE has a permanent seat and plays an integral role, demonstrates that there is a desire among citizens and local government to work towards sustaining a viable agricultural industry in Bedford County. Based on issues identified in the situation analysis, it appears resources need to be directed to crisis management (including mental health), and exploration of increasing the utilization of local foods (e.g. farm to school).

Nutrition and Health (Chronic Health Management, Mental Health, Opioid Crisis):

Description: Lifestyle behaviors, including diet and physical activity, affect the health of Virginians of all ages. With current high healthcare costs and challenges providing quality health care, chronic disease prevention and management are priority issues nationally and within Virginia. In 2018, more than 1 of 4 of Virginia's youth were overweight and obese, and more than 1 in 10 adult Virginians had type 2 diabetes. Chronic health conditions including obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure were among the top 10 issues identified in the Health Needs Assessment recently completed in the Bedford region.

According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 115 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose. In Virginia, drug overdoses kill more people than motor vehicle accidents and gun deaths, and there were 1,420 deaths related to drug overdose in 2016. Input from stakeholders with knowledge of this situation report the opioid issue is significant in the Bedford community.

Food borne illness is responsible for about 9,000 deaths each year, with yearly incidences ranging from 24 to 81 million cases and yearly costs ranging from about \$5 to \$25 billion. According to ERS, food safety research focuses on analysis of the human-illness costs of food borne disease and assessment of food safety incentives and activities of industry, consumers, and government. Safe steps in food handling, cooking, and storage are essential to prevent food borne illness.

VCE is uniquely positioned to address these issues statewide by building local and regional coalitions and increasing public awareness.

Issue Status: This issue is being addressed to some extent by VCE resources. Through program offerings from Family Consumer Science, 4-H, and Family Nutrition Program, VCE implements unbiased education concerning diet, eating habits, and nutrition/food safety. This is key to the well-being of youth, young families, and the elderly. In order to better combat chronic health management, VCE partners with the Bedford Community Health Foundation to provide additional resources and opportunities for addressing this issue.

Offerings include, but are not limited to Balanced Living with Diabetes, Teen Cuisine, after-school and summer nutrition/cooking classes, community Nutrition and Health workshops, Eat Smart, Move More, Eat Smart, Be Active, and Lunch and Learns with local businesses. In addition to providing the general public with education, VCE implements educational opportunities and provides resources to ensure food safety with local businesses. Offerings include but are not limited to ServSafe, National Restaurant Association Education Foundation coursework and examinations, as well as home-based food business and food preservation techniques/workshops in partnership with the New London Cannery.

While mental health is not being specifically addressed through VCE initiatives, a new community-wide subcommittee, *Minds Together*, has been established with support of the Bedford Community Health Foundation to address concerns surrounding the status of mental health in Bedford County. VCE has been invited to join the discussion and work together with community leaders to provide resources and programming in the community.

Based on the findings through the situation analysis, it would appear more effort and collaborations can be explored to begin to address the issue of the opioid crisis in Bedford County.

Development of Life and Decision Making Skills for Youth (Leadership, Community Involvement)

Description: While many youth are over-extended and involved with many activities, most of these activities do not meet the criteria that equip youth with life and decision making skills. Effective life development skills are those that would create the future leaders of our community, and give today's youth the goals and ideals that help them to become self-directed, contributing members of society. This represents a need for meaningful activities for youth that put them in a position to make positive changes, making a difference in their own lives and the lives of community members.

Issue Status: This issue is currently being addressed with VCE 4-H resources. Through 4-H community activities, youth are presented with the opportunity to develop leadership and life skills. 4-H members are also a part of a community that promotes citizenship by taking a pledge to use their head, hands, heart, and health to build a better community, country, and world.

The Virginia 4-H Character Counts! program developed by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, teaches trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship as the six pillars of character. This program is utilized with community partners to enhance character education in youth by using age-appropriate games, role playing, discussion, and reflection to make character values understandable.

Through growing interest and restructuring, a Teen Leadership Club is offered to older youth in the community. As part of their participation, they are given the opportunity to become role

models for peers, as well as younger youth through participation and leadership in workshops, day camps, and summer camp.

Based on the situation analysis, it would appear more effort and collaborations could be explored to reach additional youth across Bedford County (Bedford County Public Schools, Department of Social Services, etc.). Expansion of additional youth development activities can be put into action.

Financial Management, Small Business Development, Entrepreneurship, Careers

Description: Virginia Cooperative Extension programs have a long history of helping families with credible, unbiased information they can use to better utilize and manage financial resources. Feedback from the community indicates there is a need to equip youth with basic financial management skills. Emerging small business owners need support and coaching to increase their chances of success.

Issue Status: This issue is being addressed to some extent by VCE resources. VCE programs offer opportunities to address financial planning, goal setting, career decisions and entrepreneurship, budgeting and cash flow, credit, insurance, as well as saving/investing. The *Kid's Marketplace* program targets financial management skill development for elementary school youth and has been conducted on a limited basis in Bedford County Public Schools. An additional financial management program targeting older youth entitled *Reality Store* is available, but has not been utilized to date in Bedford. The Family Nutrition Program addresses budgeting of family food dollars for limited resource families.

The VCE Bedford office works closely with local government in the area of agricultural economic development. VCE in our region is actively engaged in addressing and promoting local foods systems as economic drivers. The VCE Community Viability program area can provide educational programming to address needs in small business development and entrepreneurship. A prime example is in educating farmers interested in alternative forms of agriculture and direct marketing to capture more income from this growing consumer base. Based on the situation analysis, it would appear more effort and collaborations need to be explored to better address this issue.

Parenting and Child Development

Description: Regardless of age, race, marital or parental status, parents face many challenges in raising children. Children are exposed to a wide array of influences; this exposure has increased through advances in technology. Parents want their kids to like them. However, it is also important to have Positive Parenting skills to teach children limits/boundaries, daily routines in the home to create balance, harmony and security.

Parenting challenges are compounded by the increase in single parent households as well as dual career families. Parents often feel torn between professional and parenting

responsibilities. Consequently, parents spend more time away from their children and rely more on child care. Therefore, there is a need for quality childcare as well as access to programs that will allow parents to increase parenting skills and apply these techniques toward effective family functioning.

Issue Status: This issue is being addressed by VCE resources. For example, *Parenting University*, recently redesigned as “*Parent Chats*,” provides parents of all 4 year olds attending Bedford County Public Schools/Head Start with information that will help them to better understand their children’s growth and development, as well as practical tools to help them manage their children’s behavior. This program provides a supportive environment where parents can feel free to share ideas and ask questions.

“*Potpourri for Providers*,” is a regional program offered bi-annually to child care providers as an on-going, in-service training on topics that affect the quality of their child care facilities and assistance in fulfilling state requirements. However, due to licensing regulation changes, it is reported that more children are being cared for in unlicensed facilities. Consequently, there is a need to reach this new audience.

Community Planning (Agricultural Awareness, Agricultural Leadership)

Description: As stated by a community member, “There always needs to be ag leadership at the forefront of community planning.” County government assumes the primary responsibility in addressing community planning. However, VCE can and does play an important role as a partner by providing non-biased, research supported resources.

Issue Status: To some extent, this issue is being addressed by VCE resources. However, based on the situation analysis, it would appear additional collaborations could be explored to better support this issue. Current offerings include but are not limited to providing unbiased information so citizens and landowners can make well-informed decisions on land use and training more Master Gardener volunteers to deal with an increasing demand for horticultural education.

The Bedford County Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board continues to be at the forefront of proactive planning for the sustainable future of agriculture in the community. VCE holds a permanent seat on the advisory board to provide education, support, and resources.

Water Quality and Environment

Description: As our population grows, there is increasing pressure on our natural resources. The issue of protecting water quality is gaining more visibility with Smith Mountain Lake and tourism becoming growing influences in Bedford County. Residential development results in more fertilizers and pesticides being applied. Without adequate knowledge of proper use, the risk of excess nutrients and pesticides reaching our water is real. In the same way, agriculture can be a source of non-point source pollution.

Issue Status: VCE currently partners with other agencies including the Peaks of Otter Soil and Water Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Bedford County Department of Natural Resources to provide homeowners, contractors and agriculture producers with information they can use to make safe and effective decisions that will help protect our natural resources. We engage our Master Gardener volunteers to extend and enhance our educational reach. Based on the situation analysis, it would appear more effort and collaborations need to be explored to better address this issue.