



## Dinwiddie Unit 2023 Situation Analysis Report

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Summary of community issues and Extension office response

Priority Issue	Planned Unit Response
Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and other life skills	Priority Issue #1
Strengthening the local food system	Hopefully this can be covered with priority #3
Protecting Water and Air Quality	Priority Issue #2
Getting more adults involved in mentoring youth	The Extension Office will continue to recruit qualified volunteers to help with youth programs and clubs
Ensuring safe food handling practices to prevent foodborne illness	Priority Issue #3



## Introduction

The Dinwiddie County unit of Virginia Cooperative Extension conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2023. The purpose of the analysis is to identify key issues facing the community. The results provide Extension staff with up-to-date information to use when developing educational programs for the community. A Situation Analysis is the first component of the Extension Programming Model and helps the organization provide needs-based programming that varies by time and place.

The process was led by the Dinwiddie Community Council (DCC) and involved gathering quantitative data, which added to the development of a Unit Profile. In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative data was collected from community members and residents through a questionnaire. Data and information from these activities were analyzed by the DCC and priority issues were identified. Issues analyzed by the DCC were related to agriculture and natural resources, family and community sciences, community resource development and 4-H youth development.

## 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. Population estimates for year 2021 were 28,040 in Dinwiddie County. The more urban areas of Richmond and Hopewell are both within 30 miles.

Population growth in Dinwiddie County has fluctuated slightly up and down over the past 5 years with the population being 28,208 in 2017 and 28,040 in 2021. The county remains mostly rural with the highest concentration of the population living near the City of Petersburg and the border of Chesterfield.

The age of Dinwiddie County residents averaged about the same over the last 5 years in all age groups. The younger age group populations as well as the residents aged 65+ both averaged out to be around the same since 2019 with some age groups slightly increasing while other age groups slightly decreased.

The racial diversity of Dinwiddie County changed somewhat between 2019 and 2021. There was a slight decrease in the percentage of white and black populations, while there was an increase in Hispanic population. This change represents an emerging change in the county's demographics.

Agriculture data indicates several trends over the past several years. Farm acreage has increased and the number of farms has decreased. Market Value of Farms increased over the last 4-5 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 industry is grains. Cotton and peanuts are in a transition period from the years of down prices and adverse weather. The next largest industry is beef cattle and forage production which has contracted some due to changing over to traditional row crops and the impact of weather stresses on forages. The production of tobacco as a cash crop has also decreased over the last several 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 5 years. The results of the survey are ranked below:

1. Strengthening the local food system
2. Protecting water quality
3. Protecting air quality
4. Preserving farm and forest land
5. Assisting farmers and forest landowners in production and profitability
6. Reducing misuse/overuse of pesticides and fertilizers
7. Promoting agriculture, natural resources, and environmental literacy
8. Building capacity for farm to school programming
9. Controlling invasive pests (plants, animals, insects)
10. Protecting freshwater resources (lakes, rivers, springs, wetlands)
11. Helping communities learn about farm safety
12. Agriculture Recycling
13. Helping communities be better prepared for natural disasters
14. Managing natural habitats and ecosystems
15. Promoting alternative agriculture

Some additional survey comments:

- "Dinwiddie needs a farmers market, it would help local farmers/vendors and the community



## Youth Development

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

1. Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and other life skills
2. Getting more adults involved in mentoring youth
3. Teaching healthy relationship skills to teens
4. Addressing youth mental health
5. Strengthening workforce readiness
6. Teaching youth good money habits
7. Preventing youth violence
8. Promoting scientific literacy among youth
9. Teaching families the impacts of social media for youth
10. Addressing before and after school challenges
11. Building healthy families

Some additional survey comments:

- "Empowering youth to strengthen and continue education past high school so to contribute to a more thriving community."
- "Empowering youth - they are our future."
- "Free recreation for the youth. The younger residents would benefit from activities that provide positivity and structure."
- "Youth involvement in worthwhile learning experiences. Not all youth are in sports & everyday life experiences are needed. Getting youth involved in nature, money management, cooking, life skills activities, games (inside & outside) for team building & socialization, STEM projects."
- "Education and access to education to provide the tools and skills to youth and adults necessary to obtain employment."



## Family and Community

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

1. Strengthening the local food system
2. Ensuring safe food handling practices to prevent food-borne illness
3. Ensuring safe, high quality foods
4. Strengthening parenting skills
5. Building healthy families
6. Preventing suicide and youth violence
7. Addressing adult mental health
8. Helping communities improve their quality of life
9. Helping consumers make healthy food choices
10. Preserving foods for home use (canning, dehydrating, fermenting, freezing)
11. Reducing obesity
12. Teaching families the impacts of social media

Some additional survey comments:

- "A healthy food supply. Food is a necessity and currently food prices are very high. It's hard to feed a family of 5 at today's prices."
- "Homeless, County helps everyone else but our own people."
- "Dinwiddie needs a farmers market, it would help local farmers/vendors & the community. EBT can be used."
- "Assuring food safety"
- "Lack of food banks. Transportation for elderly. Medical assistance for elderly."
- "Food for the elderly - most of the elderly are living on a fixed income and are not financially able to purchase the food they need for example, persons that are diabetic have to use supplements"



## Community Issues & Future Programming

### Issue 1: Helping Youth Develop Leadership, Citizenship, and Other Life Skills

**Description:** The Situation Analysis survey indicated the top priority issue as the need to help youth develop leadership, citizenship, and other life skills.

**VCE's Role:** Dinwiddie Extension will offer Positive Youth Development programming through clubs, workshops, camps, and in-school enrichment programs that engage youth in ways that help them develop leadership and citizenship skills. These skills as well as life skills will be taught through project-based learning to include animal science, STEM, civic engagement, social and emotional wellness, community service, and healthy living. These avenues will offer opportunities for youth to seek leadership roles, actively engage with their peers and community, and connect with positive, caring adults for mentorship. Programs will include curriculum within the scope of the Camp Counselor Training program, the embryology and butterfly projects, 4-H Yoga and emotional wellness, financial management programs like Reality Store and Kids Marketplace, presentations and public speaking, and project clubs and animals. Youth participants will practice goal setting in every aspect to learn important life skills.

### Issue 2: Environmental Quality

**Description:** The Situation Analysis survey indicated a need, from both farmers and residents, for increased emphasis to be put on Water and Air Quality.

**VCE's Role:** The office will continue to provide literature and will continue to utilize technology, as stated in above issues, where appropriate to disseminate timely information to participants and clients. Dinwiddie Extension will conduct water quality and water testing programs, when available, for farmers and residents of the county and will keep the county informed of any and all new information regarding such issues.

### Issue 3: Ensuring Safe Food Handling Practice to Prevent Foodborne Illness

**Description:** The Situation Analysis survey indicated a need for increased emphasis on **Ensuring Safe Food Handling Practices to Prevent Foodborne Illness**

**VCE's Role:** Dinwiddie Extension is committed to promoting a culture of food safety within the community through these targeted initiatives.

- Dinwiddie Extension will design and conduct workshops addressing basic food safety protocols.
- Dinwiddie Extension will create and implement targeted sessions such as "A Food Safe Summer" and "Food Safe Holidays" to address diverse food safety challenges and food safety concerns when cooking for crowds.
- Dinwiddie Extension will implement Yearly dial gauge testing days to assist residents in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of pressure canner gauges.
- Dinwiddie Extension will conduct workshops on safe food preservation techniques, emphasizing best practices to maintain food quality and safety standards.
- Dinwiddie Extension will host an informational session about the Master Food Volunteer Program, to gauge the interest of county residents.

The office will continue to provide literature and utilize technology where appropriate to disseminate timely information to participants. By offering these trainings, technical expertise, and engaging with residents through informative sessions, we aim to foster a heightened understanding of food safety principles, practices and enhance the overall well-being of county residents.

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