



Situation Analysis Report



Sussex

2018

UNIT Extension Staff

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Introduction

The Sussex County Extension office conducted a situation analysis during the calendar year 2018. The situation analysis process was led by the Extension Leadership Council (ELC) and the Sussex County Extension office. The ELC and the Sussex County Extension office were both involved in the development of a Sussex County Unit Profile as well as gathering community and resident perspectives on issues and problems in the County. Data and information from these two activities were analyzed by the ELC and priority issues were identified. An extension survey was created and shared via the traditional mailing system and during Virginia Cooperative Extension Programming. Sussex County Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Staff reviewed the responses and a list of priority issues was identified.

Unit Profile

Sussex is made up of four small towns, Jarratt, Stony Creek, Waverly and Wakefield. Sussex County is strategically centered between Richmond, Hampton Roads, and Southern Virginia along the I-95 and US-460 corridors. According to United Department of Census Bureau Quick facts, Sussex has a total population of 11,237. The racial composition of Sussex County is 40.9% White, 56.9% Black or African American and 3% Hispanic or Latino. Sussex County has a public school system consisting of an elementary, middle, and high school and one private school, Tidewater Academy in Wakefield, VA. There is also a contingent of home schooled youth in the county. The enrollment in Sussex County Public Schools is 11,000 which is a slight increase from previous years.

There are over 130 farms in Sussex County with an average size of 571 acres according to the county summary by the National Agricultural Statistics Service. Twenty-five percent of the County's land is devoted to agricultural production. Principal crops are peanuts, cotton, corn, flue-cured tobacco, small grains and soybeans. Statistics show that Sussex County's median household income is 44,608. Statistics also indicate that the unemployment rate in Sussex County is currently 4.6%. In Sussex County, the population age 25+ that have completed a bachelor's degree or higher is 10.3% compared to 35.2% in Virginia. The percentage of population from Sussex County living below poverty level between 2009- 2013 was 15.3% compared to 11.3% in Virginia. Additionally, data indicates that 22.4% of the children are living below the poverty level.

The 2018 OBICI Health Assessment reveals that 25.2% of Sussex residents have fair/poor health which supersedes the surrounding counties by at least 5-10 percentage points. Data indicates that in Sussex County, the adult obesity rate is 32% compared to 25% as the

Virginia average and ranked at 127 out of 134 unhealthy counties within Virginia.

Community and Resident Perspectives

Issues identified in the Sussex County VCE Situation Analysis were gathered primarily using the created questionnaire. Survey comments denoted instances of unsafe drinking water, high rates of poor health, the lack of opportunity for housing for those on a fixed income; a need for before and after school care for working parents; more youth activities, college and career readiness programs for youth and adults, agricultural profitability and sustainability, and violence prevention.

Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and resident perspective data, the following top priority issues were identified for the County of Sussex. Many of these issues can be addressed through Virginia Cooperative Extension resources. Others are outside the scope of VCE programming and should be referred to the appropriate government agencies. The following key priorities are Water Quality/Environment, Nutrition and Wellness, Positive Youth Development Activities, Parenting/Child Development, Agricultural Profitability and Sustainability, and Career Education/Employment.

Issue 1: Water Quality/ Environment

Water Quality/Environment was identified as the first most pressing issue in Sussex County. These issues range from nutrient runoff from farms and lawns into local waterways to drinking water concerns. Currently, VCE partners with many agencies, including the Soil & Water Conservation District and Natural Resources and Conservation Services to provide educational materials and programs to educate producers on best management practices to minimize nutrients and pesticide run-off from the fields. We also provide educational outreach to local school systems to educate youth on the importance of soil, water, and our environment. Additional VCE programs that could be provided in Sussex County include drinking water testing, and best management practices for homeowners to reduce their environmental footprint.

Issue 2: Nutrition and Wellness

The 2018 OBICI Health Assessment reveals that 25.2% of our residents have fair/poor health which supersedes the surrounding counties by at least 5-10 percentage points. According to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME); the diabetes rate is 38.2%; and the obesity rate for females in Sussex County is 47.7% and the male rate is

42.1. The State average is currently 36.2% obesity rate for females and 33.7 for males. Sussex VCE will offer multidisciplinary programming to implement wellness programs focusing on balanced living with diabetes, increasing physical activity, having access to home grown fruits and vegetables at the local farmer's market, and focusing on nutrition by way of healthy food preparation. Multi-disciplinary programs will focus on healthy eating, gardening, and exercise. Programs will be offered at school, during club/group meetings, in local meeting spaces, at camps, and churches to encourage healthy habits with gradual changes.

Issue 3: Positive Youth Development Activities

Sussex County places a strong emphasis on the development of youth and encourages positive youth development programming. Sussex County Public Schools has a 75-79% graduation rate as of 2018. Sussex is without a Parks and Recreation Department leaving youth searching for activities after school and during summer break. Sussex 4-H partners with the Sussex County Public Schools, Tidewater Academy, and Airfield 4-H Educational Center to continuously offer youth programming and camping opportunities focusing on character development. Sussex County offers clubs, Special Interest Clubs (SPIN), in school enrichment activities, specialty clubs, day camps, residential camps, and after school enrichment and activities that align with the Virginia Department of Education's Standards of Learning. Sussex 4-H encourages positive youth development and leadership within programming. 4-H programming also include college and career readiness, nutrition and wellness, STEM, financial literacy, and public speaking. Consequently, District-wide contest have largely contributed to positive youth behaviors by increasing confidence in speaking before a group, enhancing information collection, and improving listening skills.

Issue 4: Parenting / Child Development

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs, through Family and Consumer Sciences focus on Human Development, can address this priority with science and evidence based instructional workshops. These workshops can be provided for citizens of Sussex in collaboration with the Department of Social Services and the Improvement Association with an intended goal of providing education and support to parents to encourage parents to provide a strong foundation allowing their children to grow into being confident, responsible, productive contributing citizens. Additionally, 4-H Youth Development can play an active role through partnering with Family and Consumer Sciences to provide programming that supports the family unit working together as a whole to strengthen parenting skills and open communication between youth and parents.

Issue 5: Agricultural Profitability and Sustainability

According to the Sussex County, VA webpage, “Twenty-five percent of the County's land is devoted to agricultural production. Principal crops are peanuts, cotton, corn, flue-cured tobacco, small grains and soybeans. With a substantial economic contribution to the county coming from Agriculture, Agricultural education is a continuous role that Virginia Cooperative Extension provides. Currently, VCE is offering programs to address diversified land use for maximum profits. Commodity production meetings are held annually to provide farmers with up to date information on production techniques that will increase the overall profitability of their farming operations. VCE also hosts precision agriculture meetings to showcase new technologies that are designed to increase farm production and efficiency. VCE also works closely with niche producers in the county, such as fruit and vegetable producers and value-added agriculture. Livestock is wide and varied in Sussex, ranging from typical beef cattle and hog operations to dairy farms. The local VCE office will develop programs to address the needs of those inheriting farmland and incoming residents who purchase farmland that have no experience in farming.

Priority Issue 6: Career Education and Employment

Key findings conclude that career education and employment services encompass many issues. This issue is related to both youth and adults and involves issues such as community planning and services, financial management, and career development. Currently the 4-H Youth Development program is very strong with in-school and after-school programs, as well as community clubs and other county events that provide financial management educational opportunities for youth. Every year, Sussex 4-H hosts a Reality Store for local schools in which youth learn about financial management, career opportunities, and community services they may use as an adult. The Sussex Extension Office also participates in local Career Fairs where middle school youth learn more about career education opportunities in the County. Support for the aging population and adult population related to career education and community services could be done through Family and Consumer Science programming. Future opportunities may include providing more financial management workshops, career exploration day camps for youth, and offering adults workshops focusing on improving interviewing skills, resume building, and workplace readiness skills.