

Lunenburg County 2023 Situation Analysis Report

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Summary of community issues and Extension office response

Priority Issue	Planned Unit Response
<p>Finances: Agricultural and Forestry Profitability, Farm Taxes, Farm Transitions, Labor Management</p>	<p>This issue is currently being addressed by VCE through ANR commodity production meetings throughout the winter months and working one on one with producers throughout the year. However, there is a Great Need for increased efforts in this area, despite producer resistance to the topic. Specialists are needed across the state to assist agents and producers with enterprise budgets and general analysis of their operations. Great Efforts need to be made in the coming years to help producers stay afloat and remain viable in a difficult and every-changing climate. Extension programs on finances, income diversification, available assistance programs, and tax advice are all needed.</p>
<p>Local Government and Community Interaction: How Local Government Works, Agricultural Legislation, Other Topics Relating to County Function</p>	<p>This issue is not currently being addressed by extension. VCE can work with local government to promote a greater community understanding of local government and county functions in order to increase buy in and community support and pride. Additionally, VCE can work with Farm Bureau, lobbyist, economists and other agriculture legislation savvy professionals to provide education through programs and networking events.</p>
<p>Health and Safety: Emergency Preparedness, Farm Safety, Mental Health and Wellness</p>	<p>This issue is currently being addressed by VCE Lunenburg, Emergency Preparedness has long been an issue of concern with VCE. Partnering with the county and towns and emergency personnel, VCE can help further promote and assist with emergency preparedness efforts moving forward. On the other hand, Farm Safety has not been an area of focus with VCE, nor has Mental Health & Wellness – both of which have risen to great concern in the last two years primarily. VCE can work with Farm Bureau on safety efforts for farmers as well as seek funding for mental health and wellness training for VCE staff, volunteers, and potentially other community members.</p>
<p>After School Activities</p>	<p>VCE is currently working with this issue, though there is a demand for more opportunities and activities. VCE will work with local schools in the coming years to develop and implement valuable after school programs.</p>

Career and Education: Career Development, Higher Education Opportunities, Leadership Development	VCE is currently working on this issue area with programs in the middle and high school to educate young people on alternative options to college and great career choices in the agricultural and technical fields. Additionally, career skills preparations such as a Job Interview Training & Contest are offered to high schoolers to help them prepare for life during and high school. Extension will continue and potentially grow these efforts in the coming years.
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Introduction

Lunenburg County conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2023. The situation analysis process was led by the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) agents and the Extension Leadership Council (ELC). The process involved the development of a Lunenburg County Unit Profile as well as a survey to gather county resident perspectives on current issues and needs in the county. Data and information from these activities were analyzed and priority issues identified by the team. The ELC met six times during the situation analysis process, starting at the end of 2022 and working through 2023. ELC members reviewed the 2018 Situation Analysis report, offering suggestions for changes for both the Unit Profile and the community survey. The VCE office, ELC members and the county organizations shared both paper and online copies of the survey throughout the community to gather feedback and insight. Data gathered and analyzed included both quantitative and qualitative results. While many of the issues identified fall in line with Virginia Cooperative Extension and its efforts, some results proved to be outside the realm of extension work. The issues relevant to VCE, paired with ELC input, and general program evaluation information will be used to assist in program focus and design as well as outreach efforts in Lunenburg County for the next five years.

Unit Profile

Lunenburg County is a rural community located in the south-central Piedmont region of Virginia, approximately 65 miles south of Richmond. Victoria and Kenbridge are the two largest towns in the county, and Lunenburg Courthouse is the county seat. Lunenburg is bordered by the counties of Brunswick, Charlotte, Mecklenburg, Nottoway and Prince Edward. The county is 432 square miles.

County Overview & Population

According to the 2021 U. S. Census Data, Lunenburg County has an estimated population of 11,982 and a median age of 45.4 years old. The 2020 Census reported the population at 12,086 thus making another decrease in population since the 2010 Census. Despite the decrease in total population, the general demographic breakdown of the county has remained the same aside from a notable increase in the population of those of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Currently, approximately 4.7% of the population is under the age of 5; 19.8% is under the age of 18; 23.3% over the age of 65. The racial breakdown of the county includes: Two or More Races comprising 2.7%; Latino or Hispanic comprising 3.41%, Black or African American comprising 33.3%; and White comprising 58.6%. The remaining percentage of the population is comprised of Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and American Indian and population.

Housing

Currently 4,304 of the 5,880 (68%) of housing units in Lunenburg County are owner occupied. The median value of owner-occupied housing units between 2017 - 2021 is \$116,600.00. Renters reported a median gross rent of \$714.00 per month. 96.3% of residents surveyed reported living in the same house they did 1 year ago. Additionally, between 2017-2021, 4.2% of Lunenburg households reported speaking a language other than English in the home. This is significantly lower than the U. S. average of 21.3%

Income & Poverty

In 2021, the median household income was reported a \$47,269, compared to the U.S. median of \$69,717 and the state median of \$80,963. 18.7% of the county is cited as living in poverty, 160% higher than the national average of 12.3%. Additionally, 22% of Lunenburg children are living in poverty, compared to 13% of children across the state. In Lunenburg, 64% of children are reported eligible for free or reduced priced lunch.

Education

Lunenburg County is above the state and national averages for both high school and higher education attainment. 79.3% of adults in Lunenburg have a high school degree or higher compared to 91% for the state and 89% nationally.

Employment

There are a total of 159 employers in Lunenburg County and the total number of non-employer establishments stands at 622. The top 5 largest employers are: 1-Lunenburg County Public Schools, 2- Lunenburg Correctional Center, 3- Virginia Marble Manufacturing, 4- Three Rivers Treatment Center & 5- Lunenburg County. The total number of employees reported in 2021 for Lunenburg County was 2,207. Unemployment rates continue to decrease as they have over the past eight years. Currently, Lunenburg County has an unemployment rate of 3.2%. The current Virginia unemployment rates remain equal by sex; however, twice as many Black or African American residents are currently unemployed that White residents.

The most common occupations in Lunenburg are: office and administrative support occupations, production occupations, and installation, maintenance and repair occupations. Interestingly, Lunenburg has a high number of residents working in these occupations: farming, fishing and forestry; law enforcement, installation, maintenance and repair.

The top 5 places residents are commuting to for work are: 1- Mecklenburg County, 2- Nottoway County, 3- Prince Edward County, 4- Chesterfield County and 5- Charlotte County. The top 5 places residents are commuting from to work in Lunenburg County are: 1- Mecklenburg County, 2- Nottoway County, 3- Prince Edward County, 4- Charlotte County and 5- Buckingham County.

Community Health

Lunenburg resident life expectancy is 75.6 years, just under the state average of 77.5 years. 11.7 percent of the population is uninsured for healthcare, the state is at 9% for uninsured and the patient to primary care physician ratio is reported at 6,130:1 compared to the 1,320:1 state average. There is also a disparity in mental health providers in Lunenburg with one for every 2,450 people, compared to the one for every 630 in Virginia. The mental health days in Lunenburg County are at 4.9 compared to the state at 4.8. The poor or fair health percentage sits at 25.9% and the U. S. is at 19.5% which is a substantial difference.

20.3% of the county is reported as food insecure. 24% are likely ineligible for federal nutrition programs, that is incomes above 185% of the poverty level. 76% are income eligible for federal nutrition programs, that is incomes at or below 185% of the poverty level. Lunenburg County is part of the Piedmont Health District in the Virginia Department of Health. The percent of Obese Adults in Lunenburg County is 30% compared to 25% in Virginia. The percent of low-income preschoolers considered to be obese is 21.4. The percent of adults with diabetes is 12.1. The Piedmont district reported cancer-related deaths per 100,00 people at 475.5 compared to the 658 average for the state of Virginia. This is in a falling trend right now. Physical inactivity is reported at 28%, compared to the 20% statewide average, and access to exercise opportunities are limited to 57% compared to the 82% average across Virginia.

Additionally, 2021 data reported 28 teen births in Lunenburg compared to 15 for the state average.

Lunenburg reported that 13.4% of persons under the age of 65 are living with a disability. The state reported between 2017 – 2021 that 8.02% lived with a disability. Persons under the age of 65 that do not have health

insurance is 11.7%. The state reported between 2017-2021 that 8% did not have health insurance on persons under 65.

Agriculture

Agriculture remains a large part of the culture and economy of Lunenburg County with over \$17,000,000 in sales. In 2017 there were 335 farms in the county. This is 10% less than in 2012. Due to the 2018 & 2019 growing seasons and the overall economic outlook of almost all agricultural commodities, we can expect to see this number continue to drop. Unexpectedly, we did see a 2% drop in the size of farms from 2012 to 2017. Overall farm sizes continue to increase across the U. S. as there are becoming fewer, but larger farms.

Farmer demographics remain primarily White and male, with 50% of farmers being over the age 65. Nearly 31% of producers are female, and only 7.2% of producers are Black or African American. The 2017 census survey reported 130 new and beginning farms.

There are 528 farms in Lunenburg County, 97% of which belong to family farms. Thirty percent of Lunenburg farms hire farm labor and 70% have internet access.

The most common agricultural commodities in Lunenburg include timber, tobacco, corn, wheat, soybeans crops, beef cattle & hay. According to 2021 data 6300 acres of soybeans were harvested in the county and 1750 acres of corn. However, Lunenburg farms remain diverse in the commodities that they raise, rear & create, ranging from: sheep & goats to aquaculture to organic vegetables.

Community & Resident Perspectives

Community and resident perspectives were sought through the community survey and response was solicited through ELC members, VCE Staff & other VCE volunteers. The public was notified of the survey at community meetings, through email and mail correspondence, and via social media. Thirty-three surveys were completed and the top and bottom ten issues were gathered.

Top 10 Reported Issues From 2023 Survey

1. Promoting economic development.
2. Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship & other life skills.
3. Building capacity for farm to school programming.
4. Strengthening workforce readiness.
5. Promoting agricultural, natural resources & environmental literacy.
6. Helping communities improve their quality of life.
7. Protecting water quality.
8. Getting more adults involved in mentoring youth.
9. Addressing adult and youth mental health.
10. Building healthy families.

Bottom 10 Reported Issues From 2023 Survey

1. Protecting the coastal environment.
2. Protecting the marine environment.
3. Protecting freshwater resources (lakes, rivers, springs & wetlands)
4. Addressing poverty.
5. Addressing hunger issues.
6. Helping households reduce water use.
7. Addressing alcohol abuse.
8. Addressing prescription drug abuse.
9. Strengthening the local food system.
10. Strengthening couple and/or marital relationships.

Below are the top five reported issues in relation to their respective area of Virginia Cooperative Extension

4-H Youth Development

- After-School Activities
- Career Development
- Educational Activities
- Agriculture Education
- College & Higher Education Opportunities

Agriculture & Natural Resources

- 1 – Agricultural Profitability
- 2 – Crop Production/Agronomy
- 3 – Agricultural Legislation & Farm Finances
- 4 – Farm Safety
- 5 – Vegetable Gardening

Community Viability

- 1 – Healthcare: What are my options?
- 2 – Local Government: How it works?
- 3 – Emergency Preparedness
- 4 – Recreation
- 5 – Understanding my taxes

Family & Consumer Sciences

- 1 – Aging
- 2 – Mental Health & Wellness
- 3 – Nutrition & Exercise
- 4 – Emergency Preparedness
- 5 – Chronic Disease Management

Community Issues

Based on the Unit Profile, ELC Feedback, survey results, and current VCE Lunenburg agent positions and staff, the following topic area were identified as top priorities for Lunenburg County:

Issue Area 1: Finances

- Agricultural Profitability
- Farm Finances
- Other related topics: Taxes (CV), Farm Transition (ANR), Labor Management (ANR), Timber Profitability (ANR) Taxes (ANR)

Description

Farming and agricultural enterprises, though a way of life, are ultimately businesses and must be run as such for long-term sustainability. The current economy has farms pinching pennies and looking for income sources outside of the usual commodities.

Issue Area 2: Government & Legislation

- Local Government: How it Works
- Agricultural Legislation

- Other Related Topics: County Functions

Description

Government plays an important role in many aspects of the Lunenburg community from community buy in and understanding of county functions to agricultural legislation to food and nutrition funding.

Issue Area 3: Health & Safety

- Emergency Preparedness
- Farm Safety
- Mental Health & Wellness
- Other Related Topics: Healthcare options, Aging, Water Quality, Chronic Disease Management, Nutrition & Exercise, Stress Management

Description

Health & Safety are of utmost concern in today's society, with natural disasters, ever increasing time behind the wheel of vehicles and equipment, and a growing level of stress at all stages of life.

Issue Area 4: After-School Activities

Description

Working parents are constantly in need of both affordable care and affordable educational and recreational activities for their children. After-school activities provide a opportunity for 4-H staff to reach area youth and make lasting impression while saving parents much needed time and money.

Issue Area 5: Career & Education

- Career Development
- College & Higher Education Opportunities
- Other Related Topics: Agriculture Education, Educational Activities, Nutrition Education, STEM, Trades Education, Leadership Development

Description

Though college has long been considered the best option for young people starting out after high school, little attention has been paid to the full range of educational and career options available to young people. Lunenburg county has been no different and now residents struggle to find local tradespeople and discourage youth from remaining in or returning to their home community.

Future Programming to Address Community Issues

Issue Area 1: Finances

Programming Plans

This issue is currently being addressed by VCE through ANR commodity production meetings throughout the winter months and working one on one with producers throughout the year. However, there is a great need for increased efforts in this area, despite producer resistance to the topic. Specialists are needed across the state to assist agents and producers with enterprise budgets and general analysis of their operations. Great efforts need to be made in the coming years to help producers stay afloat and remain viable in a difficult and ever changing climate. Extension programs on finances, income diversification, available assistance programs, and tax advice are all needed.

Issue Area 2: Government and Legislation

Programming Plans

This issue is not currently being addressed by extension. VCE can work with local government to promote a greater community understanding of local government and county functions in order to increase buy in and community support and pride. Additionally, VCE can work with Farm Bureau, lobbyist, economists and other agriculture legislation savvy professionals to provide education through programs and networking events.

Issue Area 3: Health and Safety

Programming Plans

This issue is currently being addressed by VCE Lunenburg, Emergency Preparedness has long been an issue of concern with VCE. Partnering with the county and towns and emergency personnel, VCE can help further promote and assist with emergency preparedness efforts moving forward. On the other hand, Farm Safety has not been an area of focus with VCE, nor has Mental Health & Wellness – both of which have risen to great concern in the last two years primarily. VCE can work with Farm Bureau on safety efforts for farmers as well as seek funding for mental health and wellness training for VCE staff, volunteers, and potentially other community members.

Issue Area 4: After-School Activities

Programming Plans

VCE is currently working with this issue, though there is a demand for more opportunities and activities. VCE will work with local schools in the coming years to develop and implement valuable after school programs.

Issue Area 5: Career and Education

Programming Plans

VCE is currently working on this issue area with programs in the middle and high school to educate young people on alternative options to college and great career choices in the agricultural and technical fields. Additionally, career skills preparations such as a Job Interview Training & Contest are offered to high schoolers to help them prepare for life during and high school. Extension will continue and potentially grow these efforts in the coming years.

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2024

VCE-596-59NP (VCE-1175-59NP)