

New River Valley Agritourism Project

DHCD Management Team Workshop

July 30, 2014

Members Present: Chris McKlarney, Jenny McCoy, Lisa Bleakley, Peggy White, Michael Solomon, Kevin Byrd, Ramona Chapman, Douglas Jackson, and Elijah Sharp.

Introductions: Jackson started the meeting at 9:10 am. Each meeting participant introduced themselves and shared Agriculture/Agritourism things they noticed on their drive to the meeting.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis: Jackson led the group through a two-part exercise. First, meeting participants were asked to conduct a SWOT analysis on the Agriculture Industry. Second, meeting participants were asked to conduct a SWOT analysis on the Management Team. Here are some of the results:

1. SWOT analysis on the Agriculture Industry in the NRV:
 - a. Strengths:
 - i. Transportation Routes
 - ii. Natural Beauty – open land
 - iii. Awareness
 - iv. Community Support
 - v. Strong Agriculture Heritage
 - vi. Oldest Agriculture Fair in Virginia
 - vii. Traditional infrastructure (farmers have equipment, land, etc.)
 - viii. Farm to table
 - b. Weaknesses:
 - i. Funding
 - ii. Extension – lack of local awareness of services
 - iii. Lack of day-trips to prolong visitor’s stay
 - iv. Marketing of Agriculture
 - v. Increased costs combined with increased regulations
 - vi. Potential liability of farmers
 - vii. Next generation of farmers
 - viii. Local food – incentives for restaurants to use
 - ix. Niche – specialist misunderstanding
 - x. Lack of market access
 - c. Opportunities:
 - i. School/Agriculture programs
 - ii. Legislation opportunity to source food locally
 - iii. Community events educational opportunities
 - iv. Institutions desire to have local food
 - v. More involvement
 - vi. Food security need
 - vii. International visitors
 - viii. National movements (buy/eat local, training, 100-mile dinners, etc.)
 - ix. Local movements (So Fresh, local food, etc.)

- d. Threats:
 - i. Next generation farmers
 - ii. Surrounding regional exports
 - iii. Local politics
 - iv. Time
 - v. Legislation
 - vi. Development – retaining farm land
 - vii. High beef prices
 - viii. Fear of change
 - ix. Widespread illness
 - x. Need more small growers to support local food programs

2. SWOT analysis on the Management Team:

- a. Strengths:
 - i. PDC leadership
 - ii. Local knowledge – access to information and resources
 - iii. Well represented by local government DMOs
 - iv. Inclusive
 - v. Mutual benefit
 - vi. Local government partnership
 - vii. Understood importance
 - viii. Creative
 - ix. Doesn't set boundaries
 - x. Service to farmers
- b. Weaknesses:
 - i. Political bosses
 - ii. Need a farmer champion – mainstream, respected
 - iii. Role definition
 - iv. Need process understanding
 - v. Need specific goals
 - vi. Need team vs. individual strategies
 - vii. Time constraints
 - viii. Nice (too?)
 - ix. Floyd County not at the table
- c. Opportunities:
 - i. Engage private sector – potential transition post project completion
 - ii. More outreach
 - iii. University outreach/connection
 - iv. Use strengths in strategies
 - v. Engage farmers/producers
 - vi. Implement new programs – farmers, schools, etc.
 - vii. Current political will
 - viii. Individual enthusiasm
 - ix. To build on strengthening relationships
 - x. Marketing
- d. Threats:
 - i. Resistance of farmers
 - ii. Competing with existing businesses
 - iii. Communication overload – engaging team
 - iv. Internal focus leads to external confusion
 - v. Losing energy/interest
 - vi. C.A.V.E. people (citizens against virtually everything)
 - vii. Threat of scale/attention
 - viii. Changing methods

Progress Report: Sharp provided a brief overview of how the PDC aligned deliverables between DHCD, AFID, and the Steering Committee by developing a revised project budget and timeline. Major points included:

- Project deliverables now align with project budget
- A 1-page report card was provided to each meeting participant
- The budget concept, included in the AFID Interim Report, was reviewed
- To date, Giles County has paid all eligible expenses for the previous year worth of work
- No reimbursement requests have been submitted to either grantor
- Invoices have been sent to each participating local government for the cash match commitment on the project

In addition to discussing the work complete thus far, Sharp asked for the meeting participants to offer initial thoughts on the Strategic Plan Table of Contents. Meeting participants contributed the following suggestions:

- Providing specific goals for agriculture and agritourism that are identified by the management team needs to be complete
- Identifying specific strategies for Agriculture and Agritourism separately would be valuable
- Remove traditional ag and new ag from the chapter titles
- Create a consistent overview, examples, analysis, strategies, and estimates framework for beef, forestry, value-added food, agritourism, grapes and wines, and education chapters

Positioning Questions: Jackson led the group through the following questions:

1. Who are we?
 - Response: Three local governments exploring partnership opportunities that could grow the agriculture economy.
2. Who do we serve?
 - Response: 1) Agriculture producers, 2) agritourism operators, 3) tourists
3. What is our service?
 - Response: 1) aggregation, 2) awareness (opportunities and culture), 3) creating an agriculture voice in local government, 4) advocacy, 5) education, 6) regional structure/backbone
4. What do we want to achieve?
 - Response: 1) help sustain and grow the agriculture economy (farming) through awareness, marketing, web presence, central info resource, and sharing a common identity
5. What's in it for the region and/or our targets?
 - Response: 1) preservation and support of the industry, 2) encouraging growth, 3) increase productivity, 4) new partnerships, 5) access to information, 6) industry/business creation
6. Who do they contact?
 - Response: TBD

Next Steps:

- Management Team Meeting – focus on Strategic Plan completion

Meeting Adjournment: 11:55 am