



## **AGRICULTURAL WORKING GROUP**

### **Meeting Minutes – October 23, 2014**

#### **Attendees:**

Janet Bearden	Virginia Food Enterprise Centers
Ramona Chapman	VA Department of Housing & Community Development
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Kit Johnston	Rural Madison
Don Looch	Piedmont Environmental Council
Kenner Love	VA Cooperative Extension – Rappahannock County
Ray Pickering	Fauquier County
Carl Sachs	Culpeper County
Carl Stafford	VA Cooperative Extension – Culpeper County

#### **Food System Economic Analysis RFP – Michelle Edwards, RRRC**

After interviewing three candidates, the selection panel chose Crossroads Resource Center to conduct the Food System Economic Analysis. Michelle Edwards is in the process of finalizing the scope of work and budget with the consultant, Ken Meter. Afterward, the language will be given to Culpeper County to develop and sign the contract.

After interviewing three consultants for the economic analysis contract, we have decided not to add the input-output analysis to the scope of work. Using IMPLAN to measure the ripple effects of agriculture on our overall regional economy is not only very costly, but unlikely to provide us with defensible results. Two of the three consultants interviewed said using IMPLAN in our case would not produce meaningful results due to agriculture's small multiplier and the fact that small farms and niche farms would likely not be represented in the data. (See Ken Meter's explanation from the Crossroads Resource Center proposal attached) The third also pointed out that this methodology had limitations, but was not as strongly set against using it.

Instead of the IMPLAN input-output analysis, Ken suggested we instead add ten in-person case study interviews to the contract. The interviews would supplement the state and federal data and create a more robust analysis, allowing him to additionally provide solid recommendations for next steps. Workgroup members agreed this should make for a better report as well as more localized presentations for the public meetings. This addition will bring the total cost for the consultant up to the amount budgeted.

Janet Bearden asked how this might coordinate with her feasibility study for the regional community kitchen/cannery at the Carver School in Culpeper. Michelle responded that interview results can be shared between the two efforts. While there may be some overlap in the questions asked, the interviews for the food system study cannot replace the interviews for the feasibility study. However, the results should be helpful as a starting place.

The workgroup agreed the development of interview questions and selection of interviewees should be informed by the results of the economic analysis. Interviews should be used to highlight trends or gaps in the data. Don Loch recommended looking at two specific agricultural sectors and showing how the economic data will be used by them. Janet and Carl Sachs recommended including an option in the contract to add additional interviews as needed.

The consultant has been asked to discuss the draft results of the food system economic analysis during the next workgroup meeting via teleconference. Interviews will be conducted in early-January and the results of the food system analysis will be presented at public meetings in late-January to early-February. After discussion, the workgroup agreed three public meetings within RRRC's region should be sufficient, with locations in Fauquier, Culpeper and possibly Madison Counties.

### **Food System Asset Assessment Group Discussion**

Due to time constraints, this discussion was tabled until the next meeting. Workgroup members are asked to review the draft lists and submit any comments to Michelle. The draft lists are posted on the project webpage at [www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html](http://www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html).

### **Next Meeting**

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held on Monday, December 1, 2014, at 1:30-3:30pm in the RRRC Conference Room.