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Newsletter | January 2012

Community Round-Up



Dear Friends,

As a partner for better communities, Virginia DHCD's Community Development staff believes in taking a comprehensive approach in helping communities address their needs. This means that our job has to be working with communities to best align the resources at hand toward successful outcomes. Our investment

products and designations, like Community Development Block Grants and Enterprise Zones, are some of the tools we have available. However, there are other tools you may already have available in your community or through our partners.

The past year was filled with examples of successfully-coordinated investments in Virginia's communities. Some were strategically planned; others evolved from well-placed initial investments and an exploration for opportunity. With this newsletter, we want to share them with you as a way to celebrate those efforts and to look forward to the potential of the coming year.

Visit our website to learn more about agency resources, and contact a staff member to talk about potential projects and ways to effectively align the resources of state, local and federal governments; the investments of local nonprofit organizations and businesses; and the energy and commitment of citizen committees and civic groups for stronger outcomes for all. It is a community effort, and together we can do great things.

Sincerely,

Lisa C. Atkinson

Deputy Director
Division of Community Development

Did you know...

What is the VIDA program?

The Virginia Individual Development Accounts (VIDA) program is a special savings account program that triples your savings: VIDA matches \$2 for every \$1 you save in a VIDA account. Matching funds are limited to \$4,000 per participant with a maximum of two participants per household. The combined savings can be used to:

- Buy your first house
- Start a business
- Save for you, your child's or your spouse's education

Another great thing about VIDA, it can be combined with other DHCD programs to help participants attain their goal. If used in conjunction with the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, the participant can utilize both resources to purchase their first home. When combined with Virginia Enterprise Initiative (VEI), it can help an entrepreneur start their own business. Hear from one business woman, Cherelle Hurt, who utilized both the VIDA and VEI programs to start her own daycare, As We Grow.



WAYNESBORO IS POISED TO BECOME A SIGNIFICANT OUTDOOR TOURIST DESTINATION IN THE REGION

Waynesboro downtown revitalization is in high gear

The City of Waynesboro has been busy lately. With the grants continuing to come in to support their downtown revitalization effort, they are moving forward with several plans to boost their downtown community and capitalize on its natural asset – the South River.

This past summer, Waynesboro was presented with a \$770,000 Community Development Block Grant to support downtown revitalization, focusing on the South River. With implementation of the plan and projects with the grant money, Waynesboro is poised to become a significant outdoor tourist destination in the region. In addition, the CDBG funds will assist with physical improvements to the downtown area, particularly the downtown storefronts, which will create a more attractive destination.

Waynesboro received another grant for \$7,500 through a private/public investment with CSX and Virginia Main Street for the construction of a viewing platform, which will visually connect the downtown community

with the river. Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling came to Waynesboro to present both of the grants to the city.

"I am delighted that we have been able to award a grant of \$770,000 to the City of Waynesboro to help them complete their downtown revitalization project," said Lt. Gov. Bolling. "This project will make Waynesboro a more attractive and livable community, and that will inevitably help in our effort to attract new business, industry and jobs to this wonderful part of Virginia."

Earlier in the summer, VDOT announced an award of \$320,000 in Federal Transportation Enhancement Program funds for phase two of the South River Greenway Trail Project.

In addition to the grants, Waynesboro has continued to utilize the Virginia Enterprise Zone program to help bring more than \$8 million in investment and create more than 200 jobs in the city. In addition to the VEI program, Waynesboro is a designated Virginia Main Street Community and receives support through the VMS

program. Recently, Waynesboro was awarded another grant from Virginia Main Street in its effort to revitalize downtown. The purpose of the grant is to identify derelict buildings downtown and develop future plans for them, focusing on the former ice plant building on Arch Avenue and its surrounding structures. The major plan is to transform the building into a mixed-use residential-retail development.

Waynesboro is a great example of what DHCD works towards. The city's development initiatives are very representative of the community, and the individuals and stakeholders are very involved and engaged in enhancing this community. The city continues to utilize multiple state and private resources to revitalize the downtown area and make Waynesboro a great place to work, play and visit. For more information about Waynesboro's revitalization efforts, visit www.waynesborodowntown.org.

What Jobs are supported through NSP?

Rehab
Contractors/Subs
Mechanical Companies
Supply/Material Companies
Rehab Specialist
Building Inspector

Acquisition
Banks/Mortgage Companies
REO Realtor
Before Rehab Appraiser
Title Company

Resale
Resale Realtor
Housing Counselor
Lender
After Rehab Appraiser
Title Company

\$52 million
INVESTMENT

\$14.3 million
RE-INVESTED

\$38.7 million
INITIAL INVESTMENT



Church Hill (Richmond)

Three houses in the 800 block of North 27th Street in the Church Hill neighborhood of Richmond were rehabilitated using money from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. These three houses were sold to two teachers and a machinist.



Neighborhood Stabilization Program at work for communities across the Commonwealth

With the country facing unprecedented foreclosure crisis, Congress created the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) as a component of the Community Development Block Grant Program. By arranging for tiered financing based on income levels and neighborhoods, the program has helped to mitigate the effects of foreclosure, provide housing affordability and support local economic development and job growth. DHCD, along with public and private sector partners, established financing-mechanism strategies that could be used by the buyer. In addition to NSP, other DHCD financial resources, including HOME funds for

more than 40% of the homebuyers and seven Virginia Individual Development Account (VIDA) savers, were successful with this multi-layering financing.

One of the VIDA clients shared her experience of becoming a homeowner through the NSP program. The client had struggled for two years to repair her credit and save money to purchase a home. She was apprehensive about how the purchase would be possible within her budget. Months later, this dream became reality as she moved into her new NSP home. DHCD was invited to the ribbon cutting ceremony as



Petersburg

Michelle Christian purchased her first home in Petersburg this fall. In addition to saving through the VIDA program, Christian also utilized the NSP. Her home was the first NSP home sold in Petersburg.

she closed on her home, and guests watched the family exploring their new rooms and backyard. While NSP may not be the silver bullet that communities need to rectify all of the damages created by the spread of the foreclosure crisis, it can end up serving as a first step. The NSP funds can act as a catalyst to attract funding from other sources to tackle long-term neighborhood stabilization efforts beyond the scope of NSP.

Communities for Opportunities

Connecting job training and skills building in community development in Southwest Virginia

As a partner for better communities, the Department of Housing and Community Development is often the first resource considered when Virginia's rural communities undertake construction projects. However, whether it is an infrastructure, housing or a downtown revitalization project, the agency makes no secret that it is not funding the project, but rather the community, and it is up to the community to produce the outcomes.

DHCD has a long history of funding, not only capital projects, but also the planning efforts, community building strategies and the capacity development that can help a community implement successful projects and meet their goals. Through the Communities for Opportunities (CFO) program in partnership with the Department of Education, DHCD supports the education and professional development strategies that communities identify as the key to addressing broader issues.

The reality is that the proportion of adults who do not complete high school or pursue post-secondary training is higher than the national average in Virginia's rural area. Barriers can include transportation and child care needs, a lack of jobs to encourage personal development and possibly a cultural bias against higher education. Successful job training and General Education Development (GED) strategies are tailored to the needs in each area. One strategy that has been



funded with CFO funds and has been highly successful is the PluggedIn VA GED-to-college transition program. PluggedIn VA is an integrated curriculum designed to transition workers who lack a high school credential into gainful, entry-level employment and post-secondary education more quickly than through traditional educational and workforce channels. The curricula and classroom is linked directly to regional employment trends. The cohorts have included information technology readiness and energy education.

The most recent partnership occurred in Southwest Virginia between Mountain Empire Community College, the Appalachian Community Action and Development Agency and the Regional Adult Education Program of Lee, Scott, Wise and Norton public schools. They teamed up to provide the PluggedIn VA Construction/Weatherization Program. At the end of the six-month program, the participants had earned their GEDs, a National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) industry-recognized credential in weatherization, a Career Readiness Certificate, a Microsoft Digital literacy certification, an OSHA safety certification, an American Red Cross First Aid certification and 24

college credits from Mountain Empire Community College. In addition, the participants completed an internship to gain hands-on weatherization installation experience with the Appalachian Community Action and Development Agency, a weatherization agency partner with DHCD, who provides services to qualified applicants to reduce heating and cooling costs.

Elaina Glynn is one of many success stories from the PluggedIn VA program. "Being a graduate of the program gave me a second chance at developing a career path that I never imagined," Glynn said.

Upon completing the 2010-2011 PluggedIn VA Construction and Weatherization program, Glynn secured full-time employment with the Appalachian Community Action and Development Agency, within their residential weatherization program. She was also awarded the 2011 national GED post-secondary scholarship at the State GED Administrators' meeting in Washington, D.C., in July 2011. While in the nation's capital, Glynn was also recognized by Sen. Jim Webb. She plans to use the \$2,500 tuition scholarship to continue her studies at MECC, with the long-term goal of transferring to a four-year institution to complete her bachelor's degree.

Although the PluggedIn VA program began in Southwest with construction, weatherization and technology, an expansion strategy is in place to support skills development in the context of two more career goals: Entrepreneurship and technology and electronic medical records specialist. The PluggedIn VA model has led to a similar program in Kentucky.

"This initial commitment is expected to leverage significant local and private resources within the communities"



Building Collaborative Communities is a broad-based program that brings to bear resources from a number of state entities, including the Lieutenant Governor's Office, Department of Business Assistance, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Virginia Community College System and other agencies as appropriate.

Governor McDonnell announces awarding of \$280,000 for the Building Collaborative Communities Program

Governor Bob McDonnell recently announced \$280,000 in funding for four projects in Virginia through the Building Collaborative Communities program. The new initiative was created through a recommendation from the Governor's Commission on Job Creation, and is designed to assist regions in creating and sustaining new economic opportunities in economically-distressed areas across Virginia.

"This first-year initiative is supporting projects that create the regional collaboration that is needed to spark growth and development in these economically-distressed areas," said Governor McDonnell. "This

initial commitment is expected to leverage significant local and private resources within the communities, and stimulate job creation and economic development in these regions."

"The Building Collaborative Communities Program is an important part of our effort to help support local and regional economic development efforts throughout Virginia. I am pleased that we have been able to provide support to these important programs which will help create jobs, promote tourism and help support critical educational projects in the Commonwealth. I hope that we will be able to build on the successes of this program in

the years to come and help provide needed support to other worthwhile regional economic development programs just like these," commented Lt. Gov. Bolling, Virginia's Chief Jobs Creation Officer.

The following projects were awarded funding through the Building Collaborative Communities program: Commonwealth TransTech Marketing Alliance, Spearhead Trails Adventure Tourism, Entrepreneurship Initiative for Higher Education and the New River Valley Commerce Park Revitalization as Virginia Trade Port Base Campus.

Nonprofit Corner

Myth:

Advocacy and lobbying are the same

Fact:

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is attempting to influence legislators to support or oppose a particular issue or piece of legislation and is allowed for nonprofits within certain parameters.

Direct lobbying is defined as communication with a legislator, legislative staff or legislative body, or any covered executive branch or other government employee who may participate in the formulation of legislation. The communication refers to a specific piece of legislation and expresses a view on that legislation.

Grassroots Lobbying is defined as an attempt to influence specific legislation by encouraging the public to contact legislators about that legislation. A communication constitutes grassroots lobbying if it refers to specific legislation, reflects a view on that specific legislation and encourages the recipient of the communication to take lobbying action. This type of communication is known as a call to action.

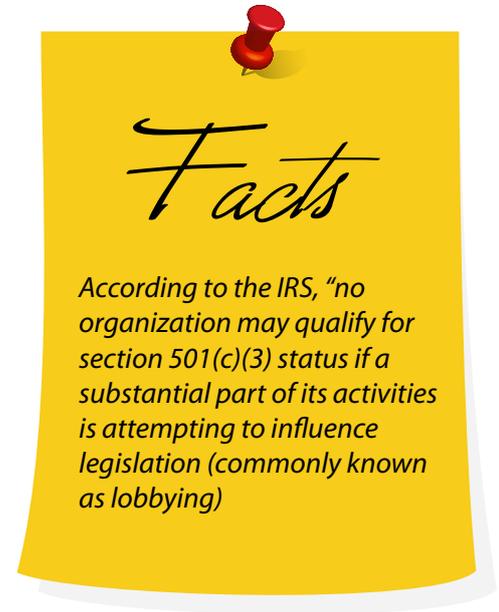
What is advocacy?

Advocacy is educating and creating awareness among legislators and the general public of issues facing the community and the importance of aligning public policy to address the need. Advocacy does not endorse or oppose specific legislation, but rather informs the community at large how public policy decisions impact service provision.

The following activities are considered advocacy, not lobbying:

- Providing technical assistance or advice to a legislative body or committee in response to a written request;
- Making available nonpartisan analysis, study or research;
- Providing examinations and discussions of broad, social, economic and similar problems;
- Communicating with a legislative body regarding matters which might affect the existence of the organization, its powers and duties, its tax-exempt status or the deduction of contributions to the organization (the "self-defense" exception); and
- Updating the members of your own organization on the status of legislation, without a call to action.

In general, according to the IRS, "no organization may qualify for section 501(c)(3) status if a substantial part of



its activities is attempting to influence legislation (commonly known as lobbying). Keep in mind that nonprofits may not use charitable resources for partisan or political activities. An organization should consult legal advice before engaging in lobbying activities to ensure legal compliance.

There is more to know, and there are great resources out there to help your organization. To download fact sheets on a variety of specific nonprofit advocacy issues, visit www.allianceforjustice.org and <http://grantspace.org/Tools/Knowledge-Base/Nonprofit-Management/Accountability/Lobbying>.

Community Development



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Partners for Better Communities

www.dhcd.virginia.gov

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