

THE COLUMN

News from
the Virginia Institute
of Government

Spring/Summer 2002

Lynchburg Welfare Reform Research Project

Phase II is underway.

BY DR. THOMAS SEAMAN

Background

In the summer of 1995, as welfare reform was being implemented in Virginia, a group of Lynchburg's civic and government leaders saw an opportunity to stretch the boundaries of the revised system. The new law was going to demand change for recipients as well as provider agencies.

The Lynchburg leadership group wanted to do more than simply move people from welfare to work, or from government-supported poverty to employment-supported poverty. The Lynchburg group's goal would be to move people to work and self-sufficiency. It became evident early on that information about the welfare population was often unavailable or in dispute. If a new welfare system were to be designed and implemented, more available and reliable information would be essential.

Creation of the Project

In view of this, the Lynchburg Welfare Reform Research Project (LWRRP) was created, comprising the City of Lynchburg, Virginia Department of Social Services, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service and Virginia Institute of Government at the University of Virginia, and the Center for Community Development and Social Justice at Lynchburg College. The management team included leaders from key city agencies, including courts, law enforcement, and schools. The project director was Dr. Gail Funke, a social scientist and expert in policy research.

The Question

The Project's study population was the approximately 2,800 Lynchburg adults and

children who were receiving TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) in October 1995. The focal question of the study was, *Are TANF families major consumers of not only TANF benefits but also all benefits and services available to the poor?* The prevailing assumption was that a substantial percentage of resources was being consumed by a relatively small number of clients. The answer would have implications for the types of benefits needed and the delivery of the services.

The Answer

The study revealed a surprise answer, as detailed in the final report:

- "TANF (welfare) families were not primary or heavy users of most community services provided in Lynchburg.
- In addition, the study revealed that there is very little interplay among community services used by TANF families. That is, in general,

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Albemarle County Family Support Program

Evaluation continues in crucial areas.

Since fall 2000, the Institute has been assisting Albemarle County's Department of Social Services in evaluating its Family Support Program. This federally funded program assists students with special needs by providing prevention and intervention services through school/community collaboration. The Institute contracted with Dr. Bruce Gansneder of UVA's Curry School of Education to design and conduct this multi-year assessment.

This year alone, the study has collected data on 146 families whose cases were open and active as of October 1, 2001. Areas under review include financial, child abuse



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Succession Management

Can Virginia localities survive the upcoming exodus?

BY SUSIE WITTER, SPHR

Doomsday Report: with little fanfare and not much notice, many of your organizations are going to face *major* labor and leadership shortages.

In a recent Society of Human Resource Management white paper, William Byham, CEO of Development Dimensions International, a global HR consulting firm, reported the following: "We surveyed 150 Fortune 500 companies, and the results were sobering.

The average company expects 33% turnover in the next five years, and fully one-third said they are not confident that they will be able to find suitable replacements."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2006, there may be a gap of as many as 10 million between the number of jobs open and the number of available workers.

Unless they start preparing now, local governments will share the gloomy fate of their private-sector counterparts.

Local governments can avoid this gloomy fate by implementing a process called succession management. Unlike succession planning, which focuses on defining specific successors for specific jobs, *succession management* defines pools of highly talented people from which an organization can choose candidates for particular positions. Pools are particularly helpful to organizations without much hierarchy and to governmental entities that must be concerned about their affirmative action efforts.

How does a manager implement succession management? Begin with Step #1 — that is, determine the size of your impending labor shortage. You can do this by projecting retirements and attrition over the next five years. Attrition can be ascertained by previous turnover analysis and percentages. Once you have taken this step, you will have begun to identify areas where you need to concentrate.



The writer is a human resource management consultant in Richmond, Virginia.

Look for more on this topic in future issues of The Column. Contact Billie Easton at 804-371-0202 or bee2u@virginia.edu. ▼

Telecommunications Options and Strategies

Seminars help localities keep up with constant changes.

The fourth seminar in the series, *Last Mile to the Virtual Communities*, held this past January, focused on the technologies currently available to link homes, businesses, and government facilities.

For the first time, a pre-conference session was offered for those who feel challenged by the jargon of the telecommunications field. This half-day primer, conducted by Andrew Cohill, director of the Blacksburg

Electronic Village, made the complex simple by leading the group, step-by-step, from the very beginnings of the Internet into today's multi-modal environment.

During the regular seminar, state and local government professionals heard from a variety of experts on such topics as 1) Bristol's (Virginia) lawsuit to allow localities to install their own

telecomm systems; 2) deploying wireless systems in either primary or secondary capacities; 3) vast supply-side opportunities Internet 2 will bring to the marketplace; 4) importance of strong local leadership in revitalizing an economically-challenged community; and 5) benefits of incorporating the latest telecommunications techniques. The program concluded with four case-study presentations on projects in rural counties and small towns partially funded by the Center for Innovative Technology.

Given the non-stop growth of these technologies and their impact on all the ways we conduct our personal and professional business, the Institute and its partners — Virginia Tech, the Innovation Groups, and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership — are committed to offering additional seminars to help our audience keep up with the continual changes in this sector.



If you have ideas for seminars on this topic, contact Tedd Povar at 804-371-0202 or tep3e@virginia.edu. Let us hear from you. ▼



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Civic Engagement Initiative

Programs multiply in communities and on campuses.

The Institute is involved on a number of fronts in reengaging citizens in public decision-making and civic affairs.

The 4th annual National Issues Forum (NIF) Workshop — *Civic Engagement and Public Deliberation* — will be held at the University of Virginia, July 21-23. This year's issues are:

- *Terrorism: What Should We Do Now?*
- *Public Schools: Are They Making the Grade?*
- *Racial & Ethnic Tensions: What Should We Do?*

The workshops are designed to teach participants how to convene and moderate forums and recording skills, and the basics of framing issues for public deliberation.

In mid-September, George Mason University and University of Virginia will host a two-day summit to draft an agenda for civic renewal in the Commonwealth. Twenty regional teams of elected officials, community leaders, educators and citizens will be invited. The summit is funded in part by a grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy.

A grant from the Council on Public Policy Education provided funds to introduce the methods of public deliberation on the campuses of community colleges and four-year institutions. This project is conducted in cooperation with the Virginia Campus Compact. In mid-February, during the second in a series of workshops, participants learned the basics of conducting



NIF forums using the issue book, *Alcohol: Controlling the Toxic Spill*.

In central Virginia, the Charlottesville Regional Civic Engagement Initiative has formed a steering committee and plans to sponsor a series of deliberative forums on the *Troubled American Family*, are scheduled for October 2002. Community partners include the Charlottesville-Albemarle Commission on Children and Youth, UVa School of Continuing and Professional Studies, Albemarle Social Services.

Work has begun to plan community forums using the recently published Southern Growth Policies Board issue book, *Pathways to Prosperity*. The Institute is ready to assist communities in holding forums using this or any other of the 30 NIF issue books.



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Albemarle Program

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and neglect, and school related issues. Performance data from fall 2001 and spring 2002 terms includes standardized test scores, grades, attendance records, and behavioral records. The assessment also considers parental involvement and work done by family support staff with teachers and other school personnel.

Data processing will be completed by mid-2002; reports on program interventions, family and children characteristics, and in-school behavior will be completed by fall.



Contact Bruce Gansneder at 804-924-0826 or bg@virginia.edu.

Email Broadcast Information Service (EBIS)

And the winners are...

Given the popularity of award shows, the Institute has decided to hand out of few of its own "best of's." Here are the winners over the last few months:

- Most Popular** Controlling skateboarders
- Most Unusual** Shopping carts taken off-site
- Most Responsive** Compensatory time — accumulation policies
- Most Technical** Online payment systems for taxes, fees, other billings and charges
- Most Sensitive** Board member — service after conviction of felony offense
- Least Popular** (generated fewest number of responses) State prison — closing impacts
- And the winners** All the local governments that are sharing information and expertise through EBIS!





**NATIONAL ISSUES
FORUM WORKSHOP**

**Civic Engagement
& Public Deliberation**

JULY 21-23, 2002

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**Succession
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AUGUST 7, 2002

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Lynchburg Project

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use of one service was not related to use of another (or others).

Finally, there was very little evidence of a large subset of families that consumed multiple services at an unusually high rate."

Even subsidized housing and health care were used by less than half of the study population over a five-year period.

The research, which ended in July 2000, had revealed new information about TANF families, including the need for a 1) different delivery system and 2) closer connection between public agencies and community support mechanisms for the poor.

Phase II is Born

These revelations were not immediately made known to decision makers and staff within the participating agencies. The LWRRP partners feared that the work would suffer the fate of much research — collecting dust on a shelf. In response to this concern, Project leadership found funds in the spring of 2001 to continue the initiative.

Community Phase

This phase has two primary goals. First, update TANF histories of the study population through July 2001. Second, share the original data and updates with supervisors and staff from participating agencies.

The new data has revealed an interesting pattern — the study families tend to receive TANF for a relatively short period of time and then leave the rolls and don't return.



Read more on this topic in an upcoming issue of The Virginia Review.

See the complete report of Phase I at <http://www.institute.virginia.edu/>.

Look for the Community Phase Report this fall.

The writer, director of Phase II of the LWRRP, is professor of sociology at Lynchburg College and director of the College's Center for Community Development and Social Justice.

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