

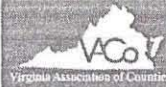
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2012 Achievement Awards

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Virginia Association of Counties
1207 East Main Street, Suite 300
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Call for Entries



2012 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 1, 2012

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. Deadline: June 1, 2012.

Program Information

Locality Tazewell County

Program Title Virtual Marketing Assistance Partnership (VMAP)

Program Category Community/Economic Development

Population Category 45,000

Contact Information

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Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

Name Jim Spencer

Title County Administrator

Signature* 

*Entries without this signature will not be accepted.

Tazewell County Virtual Marketing Assistance Partnership

One of the greatest strength of southwestern Virginia is the creativity and determination of the businesses and local governing officials to overcome obstacles in order to live, work, and play in such a beautiful unspoiled place. Due to the less than robust economy some business and industry in our region have had to cut back and even close operations. Tazewell County officials realize the number of financial challenges the area businesses face and understand that marketing budgets are generally the first line item of a budget to get cut when the economy becomes sluggish.

County Administrator, Jim Spencer, while at a IEDC marketing class came up with an idea to help our local business and industry by offering to work in partnership with them to develop a virtual business directory with video introductions for each businesses that could also be utilized by the business in digital marketing efforts. The business would provide a representative and script for the video introduction and the county would provide the staff and equipment necessary to develop a 45 second to 1 ½ minute video. The virtual business directory web site is vmap.tazewellcounty.org and after approval the county posts the finished introduction and provides a link to the business for their use. This program is called VMAP or Virtual Marketing Assistance Partnership.

Unveiled at the 2011 Business to Business Showcase in October, VMAP is a video introduction to businesses and industries in Tazewell County. Through this partnership several goals are being accomplished:

- The VMAP program provides a free marketing service to businesses by utilizing social media and other outlets.
- The partnership involves an investment of time and active participation by the businesses. The businesses provide the information content relative to their products and services and a staff member to be the company spokesperson.
- The partnership involves an investment of time and information technology skills from the county staff as they provide the videotaping and editing capabilities.
- The completed video clip is generally 45-60 seconds in length; however at least an hour of filming is required. Upon final edit, review, and approval of the business and county staff, the approved video clip is placed on YouTube for marketing.
- The businesses agree to allow the county to utilize the videos for marketing purposes in conjunction with the county business directory.
- VMAP also serves as a tool to educate our workforce and students about the career opportunities which are available in Tazewell County.

Since its inception in October, 2011, the program is growing with over eighty businesses having expressed a desire to participate. Over thirty businesses have been videoed and are now available online.

Historically, the economy of the region has typically supported manufacturing, industrial, tobacco and coal-based industries. New fiber optic broadband infrastructure has opened the door to many opportunities and the region is now emerging into a new diversified economy. VMAP can virtually chart the course for new and expanding businesses to Tazewell County as well as map the future for our youth. VMAP may be viewed at <http://vmap.tazewellcounty.org> .

VACO Achievement Awards

Tazewell County, Virginia

Virtual Marketing Assistance Program

Throughout the current economic downturn a number of local businesses and industries, in our region, have expressed financial challenges along with downsizing workforce and even some business closings. With this challenge before us, Tazewell County considered various ways to serve local businesses and industries to not only help sustain them but also to help them to grow their business. If Tazewell County could encourage businesses and industries to grow from within then the hope of sustaining and growing the local economy could become a reality. Mr. Jim Spencer the County Administrator of Tazewell County, while at an IEDC marketing class, had an idea that developed over the next several days. Understanding the current economic challenges many businesses face and that they must consider tightening their belts by cutting costs Mr. Spencer focused how Tazewell County could use existing resources to better serve the business and industry throughout the County. With the knowledge that marketing budgets are often the first to be cut the idea to partner with local industries to provide high definition video marketing material and a countywide virtual business directory portal free of charge to all businesses that desire to participate was finalized. This project would be for three primary purposes. First it will allow Tazewell County to have an online video directory of all participating businesses and industries, showcasing what each has to offer. Second it will be provided to the business or industry video marketing materials that can be

sent to potential customers or clients to market and grow their business both locally and globally via the internet. Finally the videos will be compiled into a workforce education tool to inform local unemployed workforce and youth entering employment of career opportunities in our local area, encouraging our best and brightest to plan and train for local career opportunities.

Implementation of a project of this magnitude has its challenge and is not an easy task. Utilizing only existing staff and an intern through Southwest Virginia Community College the challenge has been accepted and implementation is underway. Utilizing existing technology department staff and web site development tools, a web site has been developed (vmap.tazewellcounty.org) and businesses are being added regularly. Collaborating with the businesses, video is captured using high definition commercial grade video equipment obtained through a grant from USDA for economic development a number of years ago. This equipment makes it possible to post all videos in HD format to You Tube and as an inset on each business directory page. The businesses puts together their script, information, logos, photos, and provides an individual to be videoed presenting the script. They also provide an individual to show county staff around their place of business and point out areas of interest for videoing. After the video is captured it is brought back to Tazewell County staff to be developed into a 45 second to 1 ½ minute video introduction / commercial for the business. Each video (typically 1+ hours of video) is processed utilizing Final Cut Pro software by county staff and provided back to the business via post to You Tube non-public for approval. After the business gives approval to make the video public it is changed to public on You

Tube and posted to the vmap.tazewellcounty.org website. This innovative approach to serving our local businesses has been met with open arms and we currently have approximately 85 business that have expressed interest in participating in the program with new interest expressed weekly. Approximately 30 of those businesses have been videoed and approximately 20 of the 30 have been posted to date to You Tube on are available on vmap.tazewellcounty.org as a part of our online directory. The final goal is to have an online virtual community that provides video information of all aspects of business, community and life in Tazewell County. In order to accomplish these goals a commitment of time and resources is necessary over an extended period of time. The business portion of this project is anticipated to take at least one year to fully develop. This could prove to be an extremely effective tool for use in economic development to attract new industry and help grow existing ones.

This project is a rare opportunity to do something new utilizing existing staff expertise, existing equipment, and existing free online services to provide this service at no cost to our businesses and industries. The only real costs associated with the project for Tazewell County, beyond a commitment of staff time, is the costs associated with the internship. The total staff involved in this project is the intern, one IT staff person developing the web site, and committed to one day a week taking video, and on staff person processing and posting the video to You Tube.

According to You Tube statistics videos posted to date have received 415 plays via You Tube and that number continues to increase as the program develops. This number of hits translates into customer base, unfortunately at this time we have no

way to directly measure the customer growth realized from this program. The true value of this video can be realized by the business directly through social media marketing postings and re-postings of the link to facebook, linked in, twitter, and other social media sites that may be used by the business.

This project can easily be duplicated across the Commonwealth of Virginia by other localities at little or no cost as long as the staffing and equipment needed are available. It is not necessary to have expensive commercial grade equipment to develop this type of program. A simple \$200.00 HD camcorder along with low cost video editing software can be used. Staff with the ability to develop web sites, video, and edit / process the video is an absolute must.

With this partnership and collaboration with our business and industries and a focused effort toward this virtual marketing opportunity Tazewell County sees real opportunity to help our businesses and industries to grow from within. Since 70% to 80% of all growth will come from within it is clear this is an area that should be a central focus of our economic development efforts.