

Virginia's Rural Stakeholder Communication Plan

A Study of the Preferred Communication Methods
of Virginia's Rural Stakeholders

September 2014

“Virginia's Rural Stakeholder Communication Plan is a useful tool for understanding the preferred communication methods of our rural stakeholders in order to address the unique challenges of Virginia's rural communities and ensure access to health equity related resources.”

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Background

The Office of Minority Health and Health Equity (OMHHE) is an office of the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and Virginia's designated: State Office of Rural Health, State Office of Minority Health and State Primary Care Office. VDH-OMHHE's mission is to identify health inequities and their root causes and promote equitable opportunities to be healthy. To accomplish this mission, VDH-OMHHE works with a variety of stakeholders who live and serve in Virginia's rural and underserved communities; including, community leaders, non-profit organizations, universities, government organizations, free health clinics, health education centers, hospitals and faith-based organizations among others.

VDH-OMHHE's partnership with these stakeholders is crucial to the success of its mission. VDH-OMHHE assists Virginia's rural and underserved communities in accessing equitable health opportunities in part by sharing information on funding opportunities, federal and state programs, policy updates, upcoming local and national events, webinars and trainings, news articles and community resources. In order to ensure information is being communicated effectively and preferably, VDH-OMHHE created and distributed a survey in April 2014 requesting rural stakeholders to indicate their preferred methods of communication, information types, formatting and frequency. The survey was designed to inform VDH-OMHHE's future communication practices with Virginia's rural stakeholders and for organizations who wish to use the information provided for their own communication plans.

Methods

Data Collection

VDH-OMHHE distributed the online Virginia Rural Stakeholder Preferred Communications Method Survey on April 1, 2014. The survey was available for completion from April 1-30, 2014. The survey was advertised on the VDH-OMHHE's home web page (www.vdh.virginia.gov/omhhe), in the Virginia Rural Health Association (VRHA)'s weekly e-newsletter and distributed by direct e-mail from VDH-OMHHE staff to applicable partners. In total, **48 surveys** were completed and received.

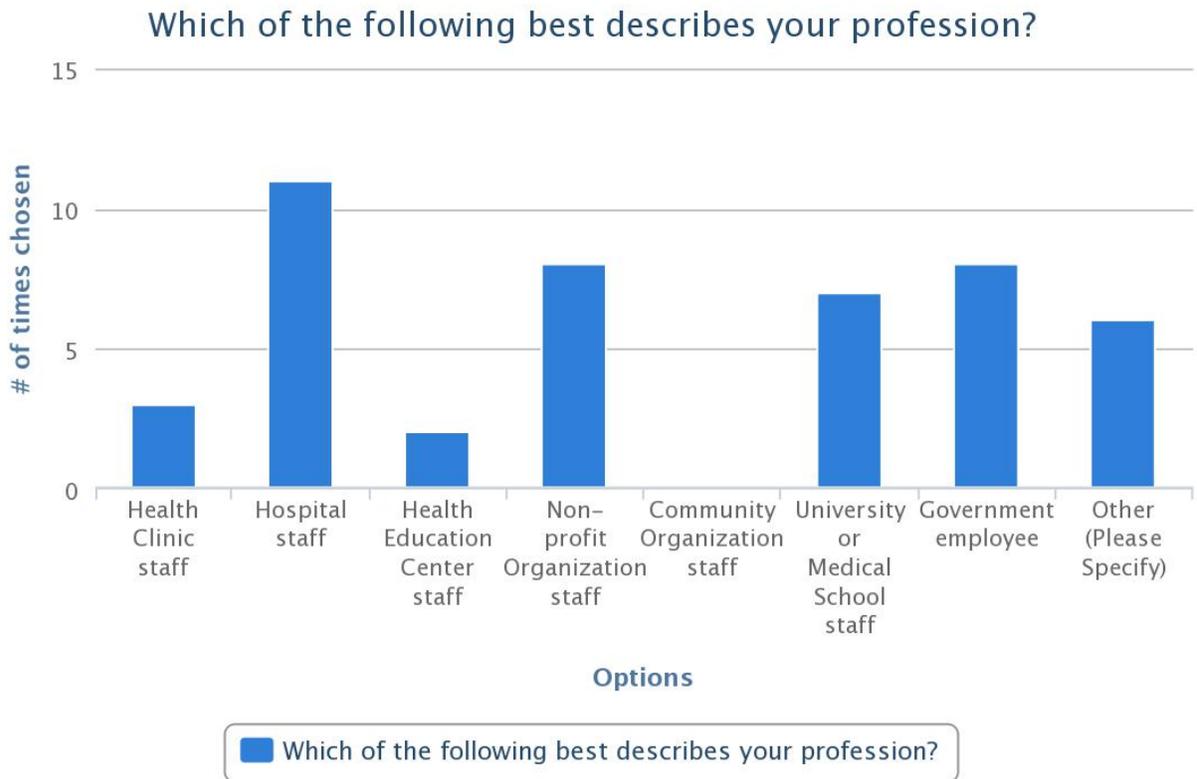
Audience

The survey targeted individuals who live, work in or influence rural populations of Virginia. Stakeholders include: Virginia health clinic staff, hospital staff, health education center staff, non-profit organization staff, university or medical school staff, government employees, minority health advocates and medical students.

Survey Content

Survey content included questions regarding respondents' demographics, social media usage and preferences, electronic and print communication usage and preferences, as well as respondents' interest in, and preferred frequency of, certain information types.

Demographics



- 24.4% of respondents are Hospital Staff.
- 17.8% of respondents are Non-profit Organization Staff.
- 17.8% of respondents are Government Employees.
- 15.6% of respondents are University or Medical School Staff.
- 13.3% of respondents are in unlisted professions.
- 6.7% of respondents are Health Clinic Staff.
- 4.4% of respondents are Health Education Center Staff.

Respondents who responded with “Other” listed the following:

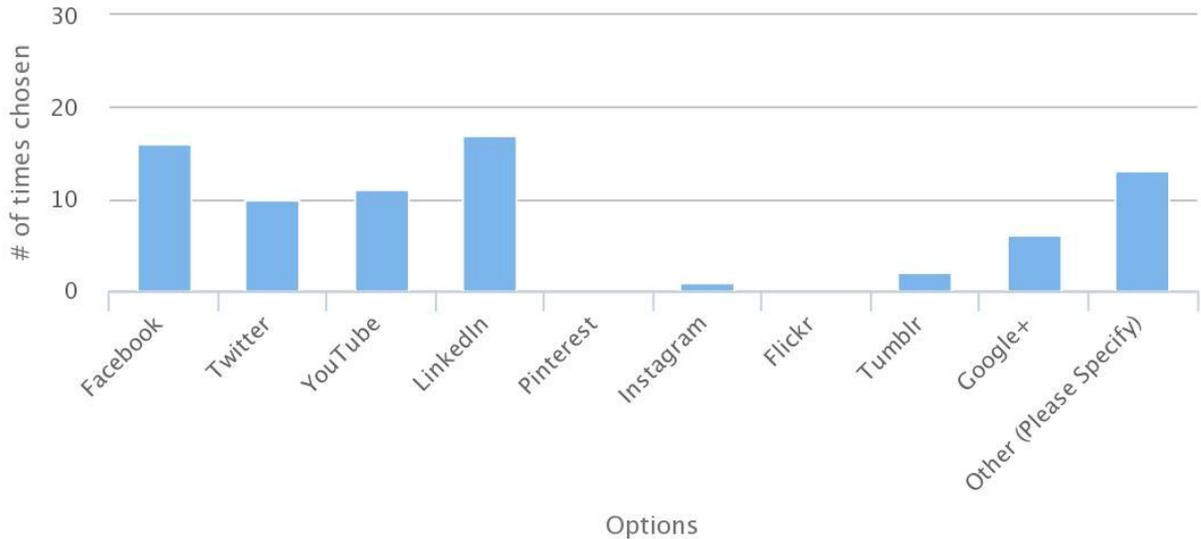
- One (1) respondent is a Minority Health Advocate.
- One (1) respondent is a Nursing Instructor.
- One (1) respondent is a Nursing Facility Provider.
- One (1) respondent is a Physician.
- One (1) respondent is a Medical Education Student.

Social Media

Respondents were asked which social media sites they used as professional resources for sharing and receiving rural information. Respondents were able to include all sites utilized without limitations. Social media platforms listed included: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr, Tumblr, and Google+. A blank text box was also included for respondents to write in an alternative site.

Social Media Question 1:

Please indicate which of the following sites you utilize as a professional resource for sharing and receiving rural information:



Respondents indicated utilization of the following sites as professional resources for sharing and receiving rural information:

- 45.9% of respondents utilize LinkedIn as a professional resource.
- 43.2% of respondents utilize Facebook as a professional resource.
- 35.1% of respondents specified another professional resource not listed.
- 29.7% of respondents utilize YouTube as a professional resource.
- 27.0% of respondents utilize Twitter as a professional resource.
- 16.2% of respondents utilize Google+ as a professional resource.
- 5.4% of respondents utilize Tumblr as a professional resource.
- 2.7% of respondents utilize Instagram as a professional resource.

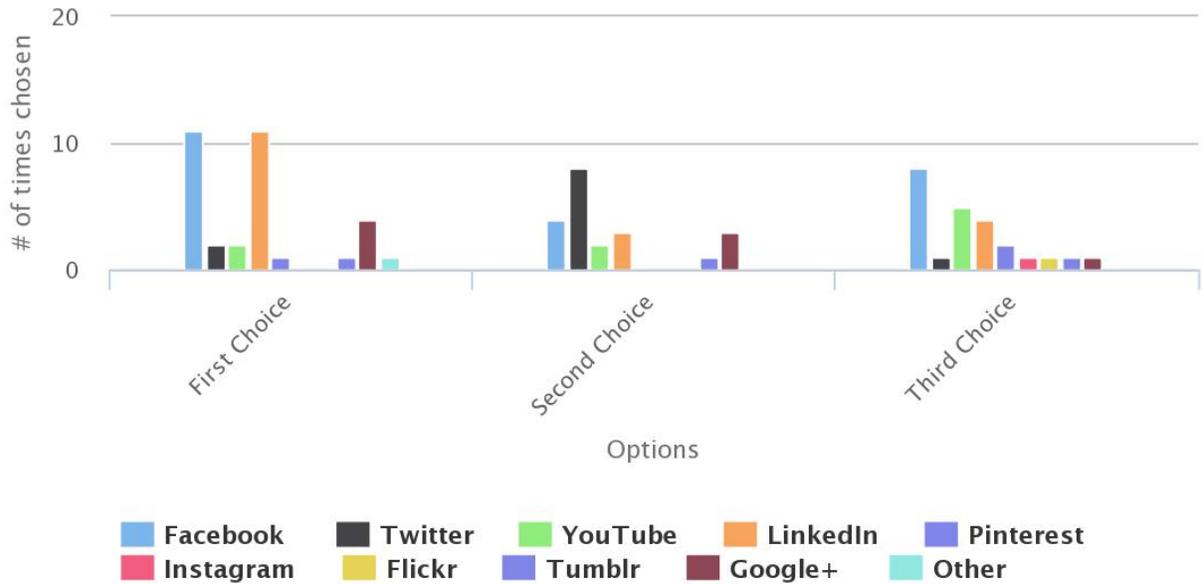
Respondents who responded with “Other” listed the following:

- E-mail
- Only E-mail
- None
- Newsletter
- Webinar

Respondents were asked to provide more in-depth feedback on which sites they prefer by listing their first, second and third choice social media platform preference to share and receive rural information. The same options were listed.

Social Media Question 2:

Which social media sites do you prefer to use as a professional resource for sharing and receiving rural information? Please indicate your first, second and third preferences



Respondents chose the following social media sites as one of their three preferences:

- 48% of respondents chose Facebook as one of their three preferences.
- 37.5% of respondents chose LinkedIn as one of their three preferences.
- 23% of respondents chose Twitter as one of their three preferences.
- 19% of respondents chose YouTube as one of their three preferences.
- 19% of respondents specified another professional resource not listed as one of their three preferences.
- 17% of respondents chose Google+ as one of their three preferences.
- 6.3% of respondents chose Tumblr as one of their three preferences.
- 6.3% of respondents chose Pinterest as one of their three preferences.
- 2% of respondents chose Instagram as one of their three preferences.
- 2% of respondent chose Flickr as one of their three preferences.

Respondents who responded with “Other” listed the following:

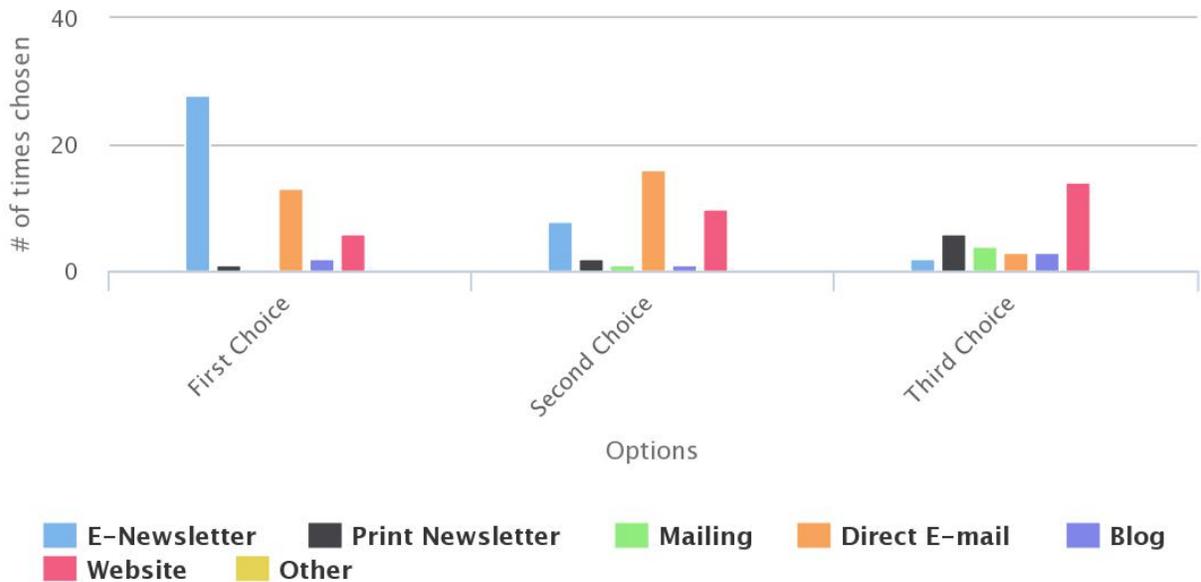
- E-mail
- None
- Webinar

Electronic and Print Communication

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred print and electronic communication forms. They were asked to choose a first, second and third preference among the following list of communication forms: E-Newsletter, Print Newsletter, Mailing, Direct E-mail, Blog, Website and Other. Respondents were asked to write in a response if they chose “Other” as a preference.

Electronic and Print Communication Question 1:

Which electronic and print communication forms do you prefer to use as a professional resource for sharing and receiving rural information? Please indicate your first, second and third preferences.



Respondents chose the following electronic and print communication forms as one of their three preferences:

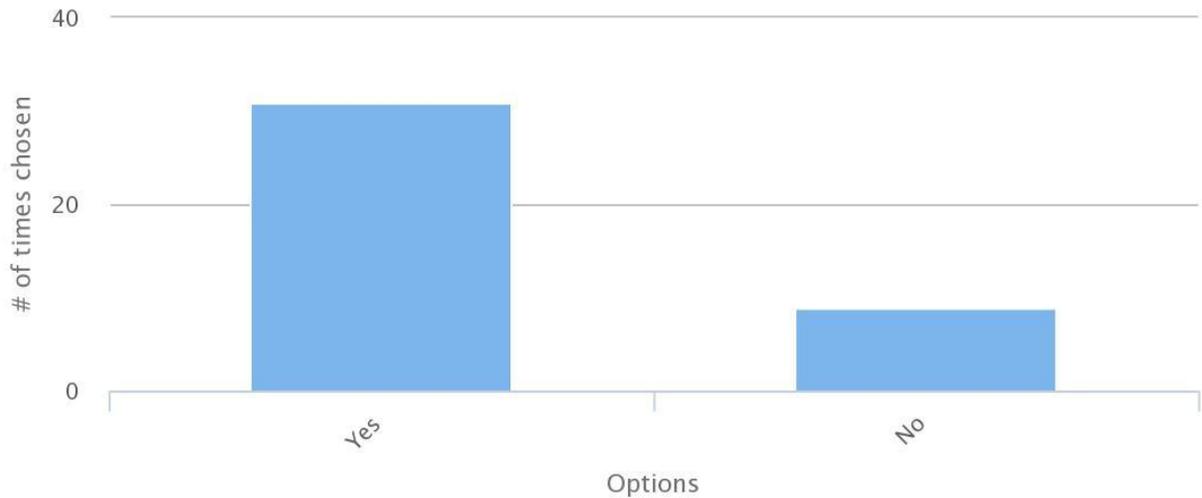
- 79% of respondents chose E-Newsletter as one of their three preferences.
- 67% of respondents chose Direct E-mail as one of their three preferences.
- 63% of respondents chose Website as one of their three preferences.
- 19% of respondents chose Print Newsletter as one of their three preferences.
- 13% of respondents chose Mailing as one of their three preferences.
- 13% of respondents chose Blog as one of their three preferences.
- 2% of respondents specified another professional resource not listed as one of their three preferences.

Respondents who responded with “Other” listed the following: “Digest versions of posts. Daily summary of posts, but not individual posts.”

Respondents were asked whether or not they subscribe to e-newsletters, blogs, search engine alerts, or other communication tools as professional resources to receive e-mail notifications when new rural information is available.

Electronic and Print Communication Question 2:

Do you subscribe to e-newsletters, blogs, search engine alerts or other communication forms as professional resources to receive e-mail notifications when new rural information is available?



65% of respondents indicated that they **do** have subscriptions to one or all of these communication forms.

Respondents were asked to write in the top five sources that they use to stay updated on rural information.

Electronic and Print Communication Question 3: What sources do you primarily use to stay updated on rural information?

- 44% of respondents listed “Virginia Rural Health Association.”
- 19% of respondents listed “E-mail.”
- 13% of respondents listed “National Rural Health Association.”
- 8% of respondents listed “News Organizations.”
- 8% of respondents listed “Social Media.”
- 6% of respondents listed “E-Newsletters.”
- 4% of respondents listed “Mailings.”
- 4% of respondents listed “Rural Assistance Center.”
- 4% of respondents listed “Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association.”
- 4% of respondents listed “Website.”
- 4% of respondents listed “Word of Mouth.”

Additional resources listed include:

Advisory Board
American Health Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
Appalachian Regional Commission
Association of Clinicians for the Underserved
Churches
Employer
Google Searches
Grassroots Organizations
Medline
National Area Health Education Centers Organization
National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health
National Rural Mental Health Association
Office of Minority Health and Health Equity
Office of Rural Health Policy
Peer Organizations
Planning District Data Sets
Rural Health Resource Center
Surround Health Blogs
Virginia Department of Health
Virginia Nurses Association
Virginia Rural Access Center
Weldon Cooper Data Sets

Types of Information

Respondents were questioned on the type of communication outlet they preferred for each item in a list of different information types. The types of information listed included: Funding Opportunities, Events (Conferences, Trainings, Webinars, etc.), Policy Updates, Information on Best Practices, News Articles and Recent Studies, Programs and Initiatives, Tools and Resources, Data and Statistics, Job Opportunities and New Staff Profiles and Departing Staff Notifications. For each information type, respondents were asked to choose which type of communication outlet they would prefer to use to receive each type of information. The communication outlets listed included: 1) Social Media Site, 2) E-Newsletter, Blog or Website, 3) Mailing or Print Newsletter, or 4) Direct E-mail.

Types of Information Question 1:

Please indicate your preference for receiving the following types of information.



Respondents chose **“Direct E-mail”** as the top choice of outlet for the following types of information:

- Funding Opportunities
- Events (Conferences, Trainings, Webinars, etc.)
- Policy Updates

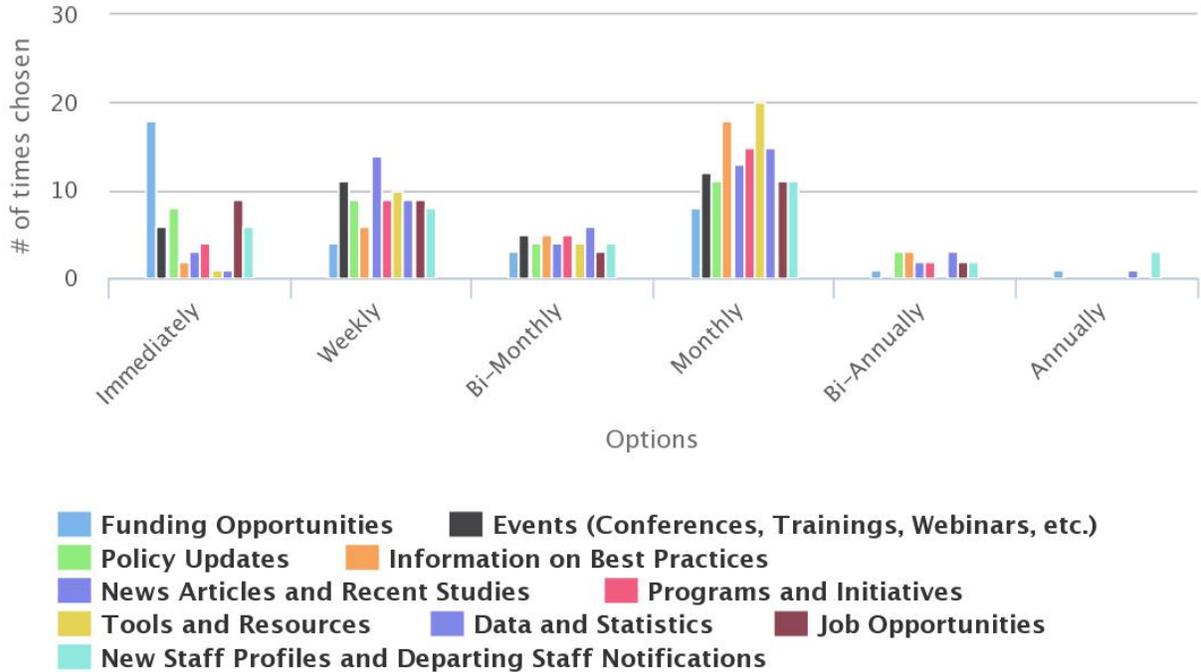
Respondents chose **“E-Newsletter, Blog or Website”** as the top choice of outlet for the following types of information:

- Best Practices
- News Articles and Recent Studies
- Programs and Initiatives
- Tools and Resources
- Data and Statistics
- Job Opportunities
- New Staff Profiles and Departing Staff Notifications

Respondents were asked how often they preferred to receive certain types of information. The same information types were listed. The options listed for frequency of communication included: “Immediately,” “Weekly,” “Bi-Monthly,” “Monthly,” “Bi-Annually,” and “Annually.”

Types of Information Question 2:

How often do you prefer to receive the following types of information?



The most common response across all information types was “**Monthly.**”
 The second most common response across all information types was “**Weekly.**”
 The least common response across all information types was “**Annually.**”

- A majority of respondents chose the following frequencies for each information type:
- 51% of respondents prefer to receive “**Funding Opportunities**” *immediately.*
 - 34% of respondents prefer to receive “**Events (Conferences, Trainings, Webinars)**” *monthly.*
 - 31% of respondents prefer to receive “**Policy Updates**” *monthly.*
 - 53% of respondents prefer to receive “**Information on Best Practices**” *monthly.*
 - 39% of respondents prefer to receive “**News Articles and Recent Studies**” *weekly.*
 - 43% of respondents prefer to receive “**Programs and Initiatives**” *monthly.*
 - 57% of respondents prefer to receive “**Tools and Resources**” *monthly.*
 - 43% of respondents prefer to receive “**Data and Statistics**” *monthly.*
 - 32% of respondents prefer to receive “**Job Opportunities**” *monthly.*
 - 31% of respondents prefer to receive “**New Staff Profiles/Departing Staff Notifications**” *monthly.*

Conclusions

The Virginia Rural Stakeholder Preferred Communication Methods Survey reached a wide range of stakeholders. There was a substantive response to the survey with participants sharing important information regarding their preferred communication methods. Notably, there is a large social media presence among Virginia’s rural stakeholders. However, survey findings indicate a strong preference of

e-newsletter and direct e-mail communication for typical types of information. A brief summary of varying communication channels and Virginia rural stakeholder's preferences are further detailed below.

Social Media

Results reveal that 97.3% of Virginia's rural stakeholders are engaged on at least one social media platform as a means of sharing and receiving rural information. The most popular platforms include: LinkedIn (45.9%), Facebook (43.2%), YouTube (29.7%), Twitter (27.0%), and Google+ (16.2%). Results indicate that less than 6% of Virginia's rural stakeholders are engaged on Instagram, Tumblr or Pinterest.

Electronic and Print Communication

Though results show most of Virginia's rural stakeholders have accounts on social media platforms and use them as a means of sending and receiving rural information, only 4.9% of rural stakeholders chose "Social Media Site" as their preferred method of communication when presented with certain types of information. In addition, 77.5% of rural stakeholders indicated that they subscribe to e-newsletters, blogs, search engine alerts or other communication tools that automatically send them e-mails when new information is available on certain topics or from specific organizations, indicating a preference that new information of interest is sent directly to stakeholders as opposed to posted to social media platforms.

Recommendations

Based on the 2014 survey results, Virginia's rural stakeholders prefer the following:

1. **Communication Methods** –
 - While direct e-mail proves to be the preferred method of receiving rural information, the strong social media presence of rural stakeholders indicates that information shared there has a strong chance of being seen and potentially shared.
 - Creating e-newsletters, blogs and websites that allow rural stakeholders to set-up e-mail subscriptions when new information is available proves an effective method of reaching this audience.
2. **Types of Information** –
 - *Direct E-mail* - Rural stakeholders indicate wanting the following types of information through direct e-mail: funding opportunities, events (conferences, trainings, webinars, etc.) and policy updates, suggesting that these types of information are most crucial to their work.
 - *E-Newsletter, Blog or Website* - Rural stakeholders indicate wanting the following types of information through e-newsletter, blog or website: best practices, news articles and recent studies, programs and initiatives, tools and resources, data and statistics, job opportunities, and new staff profiles and departing staff notifications.
3. **Frequency of Information** –
 - *Immediately* - Survey results show that information related to funding opportunities is extremely important to rural stakeholders. It is recommended that this information be shared immediately through direct communication methods.
 - *Monthly* - All other information is preferably received monthly.
 - *Weekly* - Weekly communication is the second most preferred frequency to monthly updates. Based on the urgency of the information, monthly or weekly updates are recommended for communicating with rural stakeholders.

Specified Preferences

Rural stakeholders who completed the survey were given the option to have their organization’s communication preferences listed in this report. The following organizations chose to have their preferences listed for public usage

- Dickenson Community Hospital, Clintwood, VA
- *Riverside Tappahannock Hospital*, Tappahannock, VA
- *Southwest Care Connection for Children*, Bristol, VA
- *Community Capacity Builders, LLC*, Suffolk, VA

<p><i>Dickenson Community Hospital</i> P.O. Box 1216 Clintwood, VA 24228</p> <p>Contact: Mark Vanover, Assistant Vice President vanoverms@msha.com (276) 926-0332</p>	
<p>Preferred Social Media Sites:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LinkedIn 2. YouTube 3. Facebook 	<p>Preferred Forms of Electronic and Print Communication:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. E-Newsletter 2. Website 3. Direct E-mail
<p>Subscriber of e-newsletters, blogs, search engine alerts or other communication forms: Yes</p>	<p>Primary Sources of Rural Information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Virginia Rural Health Association 2. Articles from LinkedIn
<p>Preferred Methods of Receiving Certain Types of Information:</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>E-Newsletter, Blog or Website</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events (Conferences, Trainings, Webinars, etc.) • Policy Updates • News Articles and Recent Studies • Programs and Initiatives • New Staff Profiles and Departing Staff Notifications 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Direct E-mail</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Opportunities • Information on Best Practices • Tools and Resources • Data and Statistics
<p>Preferred Frequency of Receiving Certain Types of Information:</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Send Immediately</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Opportunities 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Send Weekly</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Opportunities • New Staff Profiles and Departing Staff Notifications
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Send Monthly</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events (Conferences, Trainings, Webinars, etc.) • Policy Updates • Programs and Initiatives • Tools and Resources • Data and Statistics 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Send Bi-Annually</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on Best Practices • News Articles and Recent Studies

Riverside Tappahannock Hospital

618 Hospital Road
Tappahannock, VA 22560

Contact:

Kate Lim, Director of Quality

kate.lim@rivhs.com

(804) 443-6282

<p>Preferred Social Media Sites:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LinkedIn 2. Facebook 3. YouTube 		<p>Preferred Forms of Electronic and Print Communication:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. E-Newsletter 2. Direct E-mail 3. Website 	
<p>Subscriber of e-newsletters, blogs, search engine alerts or other communication forms: Yes</p>		<p>Primary Sources of Rural Information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Virginia Rural Health Association 	
Preferred Methods of Receiving Certain Types of Information:			
<i>E-Newsletter, Blog or Website</i>		<i>Direct E-mail</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events (Conferences, Trainings, Webinars, etc.) • Policy Updates • Information on Best Practices • News Articles and Recent Studies • Programs and Initiatives • Tools and Resources • Data and Statistics • New Staff Profiles and Departing Staff Notifications 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Opportunities • Job Opportunities • New Staff Profiles and Departing Staff Notifications 	
Preferred Frequency of Receiving Certain Types of Information:			
<i>Send Immediately</i>		<i>Send Weekly</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Opportunities • New Staff Profiles and Departing Staff Notifications 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News Articles and Recent Studies • Programs and Initiatives • Tools and Resources • Data and Statistics • Job Opportunities 	
<i>Send Monthly</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events (Conferences, Trainings, Webinars, etc.) • Policy Updates • Information on Best Practices 			

Southwest Care Connection for Children

15068 Lee Highway Suite 900
Bristol, VA 24202

Contact:

Lydia Landis, Program Director/Nursing Supervisor

lydia.landis@vdh.virginia.gov

(276) 645-4900

<p>Preferred Social Media Sites:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LinkedIn 	<p>Preferred Forms of Electronic and Print Communication:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. E-Newsletter, Direct E-mail, Website 2. Mailing 3. Print Newsletter
<p>Subscriber of e-newsletters, blogs, search engine alerts or other communication forms: Yes</p>	<p>Primary Sources of Rural Information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. E-mail 2. E-Newsletters 3. Mailings
<p>Preferred Methods of Receiving Certain Types of Information:</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>E-Newsletter, Blog or Website</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Updates • Programs and Initiatives 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Direct E-mail</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Opportunities • Events (Conferences, Trainings, Webinars, etc.) • Information on Best Practices • Tools and Resources • New Staff Profiles and Departing Staff Notifications
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Mailing or Print Newsletter</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News Articles and Recent Studies • Data and Statistics 	
<p>Preferred Frequency of Receiving Certain Types of Information:</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Send Immediately</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events (Conferences, Trainings, Webinars, etc.) • Policy Updates • Job Opportunities • New Staff Profiles and Departing Staff Notifications 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Send Weekly</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on Best Practices • Tools and Resources
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Send Monthly</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Opportunities • News Articles and Recent Studies • Programs and Initiatives • Data and Statistics 	

<p><i>Community Capacity Builders, LLC</i> 3006 Haydock Court Suffolk, VA 23435</p> <p>Contact: Seneca Bock, Founder and Chief Strategist skbock@yahoo.com (757) 752-0729</p>	
Preferred Social Media Sites: 1. LinkedIn	Preferred Forms of Electronic and Print Communication: 1. Blog, Website
Subscriber of e-newsletters, blogs, search engine alerts or other communication forms: Yes	Primary Sources of Rural Information: 1. Existing e-mail network 2. Word of mouth 3. Grassroots organizations 4. Churches 5. Facebook
Preferred Methods of Receiving Certain Types of Information:	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>E-Newsletter, Blog or Website</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events (Conferences, Trainings, Webinars, etc.) • Policy Updates • News Articles and Recent Studies • Programs and Initiatives • New Staff Profiles and Departing Staff Notifications 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Direct E-mail</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Opportunities • Information on Best Practices • Tools and Resources • Data and Statistics
Preferred Frequency of Receiving Certain Types of Information:	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Send Immediately</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Opportunities 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Send Weekly</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Opportunities • New Staff Profiles and Departing Staff Notifications
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Send Monthly</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events (Conferences, Trainings, Webinars, etc.) • Policy Updates • Programs and Initiatives • Tools and Resources • Data and Statistics 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Send Bi-Annually</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on Best Practices • News Articles and Recent Studies

Thank you to all survey participants for providing valuable input into the preferred communication methods of Virginia’s rural stakeholders. An online version of this plan is available on the VDH-OMHHE website at: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OMHHE/>. Print versions are not available. If you would like your organization’s specified communication preferences to be considered in future editions of the plan, please contact Sarahbeth Jones, Health Equity Communications Specialist, at sarah.jones@vdh.virginia.gov or (804) 864-7422.