



Projections Data Users Meeting with State Agencies

October 2017

On October 18, 2017, the Cooper Center for Public Service hosted a data users meeting in Richmond with state agencies. Following the release of the 2017 statewide population projections, the meeting aimed to: (1) better understand how the population projections are used by state agencies; (2) learn more about state agencies' needs related to population projections.

Twelve agency representatives attended the meeting. This report provides a summary of the meeting.

USE OF POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population projections are currently being used in a number of ways by state agencies:

1. Virginia Department of Health uses age projections, especially those of the 75+ age group, to determine the needs for future nursing home beds.
2. Virginia Department of Military Affairs uses population projections to determine where future Regional Readiness Centers should be. It also uses age projections for recruiting the targeted 18-32-year-old population as well as the race/ethnicity projections to staff Spanish-speaking recruiters.
3. Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control uses age projections, especially those of the 21+ age group, for future store location analysis.
4. Virginia Department of State Police uses age, sex, race and ethnicity projections to plan the future expansion of diversity among recruits.
5. Virginia Department of Veterans Services uses projections to staff its offices.

While population estimates, also produced by the Cooper Center, are more widely and frequently used by state agencies than population projections, more and more state agencies are recognizing the value of using the projections in their future workforce or facility planning. In addition, some agencies, such as Virginia Department of Social Services and Virginia Department of Taxation, mentioned the 5-year, short-term projections can be used together with population estimates for short-term planning purposes.

Since many localities fear that the statewide projections may be used by state agencies for budgeting or fund allocation purposes, this topic was specifically discussed. None of the state

agencies at the meeting reported such use. A representative from Virginia Department of Transportation, while not able to attend the meeting, provided an email response that “for funding distribution of transportation funding at VDOT, we use current estimates and do not use projections from the Weldon Cooper sources.” A few meeting participants mentioned that some federal grants may require population projections, but there is no requirement that the Weldon Cooper Center must be the source of the projections.

ADDITIONAL NEEDS RELATED TO THE PROJECTIONS

Three state agencies provided four suggestions for additional needs related to projections:

1. Virginia Department of Social Services would like to have 5-year, short-term projections for the population living in poverty by locality. This would help the agency, as well as localities, anticipate the needs for their programs in the next 3-5 years.
2. Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control would like to have a specific age group breakdown of the drinking-age population (ages 21+) by locality.
3. Virginia Department of Military Affairs would like to have a specific age group breakdown of the targeted recruit pool (ages 18-32) by locality.
4. Virginia Department of Military Affairs would also like to have projections for the bordering counties/cities/towns of other states along the Virginia state line for recruitment purposes.

It was also suggested to the Cooper Center that there is a great need to promote and raise awareness of its population data among state agencies so that more of them, especially those under the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, can take advantage of this data resource in better understanding future population change and in making informed planning decisions.

NEXT STEPS

The Cooper Center will tailor the data format to meet the first three needs specified by the state agencies. Projections for bordering counties/cities/towns are beyond the scope and budget of the current project.

The Cooper Center will host another projections data users meeting with local governments in Charlottesville in mid-November. Some of the information learned from the state agencies meeting will be shared with localities.