

How Virginia Cooperative Extension is Strengthening Evaluation with PEARS

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) is a statewide organization delivering community-based education and outreach. With programming spanning diverse geographic regions and topical areas, VCE recognized a growing need for a unified, evaluation-focused data management system. The organization's legacy systems, developed over time to meet their needs, had become fragmented and inefficient—creating barriers to effective program monitoring, reporting, and strategic learning.

The Challenge

VCE historically relied on disconnected systems for data reporting and management, limiting timely access, coordination, and effective storytelling. During planning district listening sessions, faculty highlighted significant shortcomings in the existing reporting system, particularly the lack of centralized data access.

The Solution: Why PEARS?

VCE selected PEARS, a system purpose-built for Extension, offering:

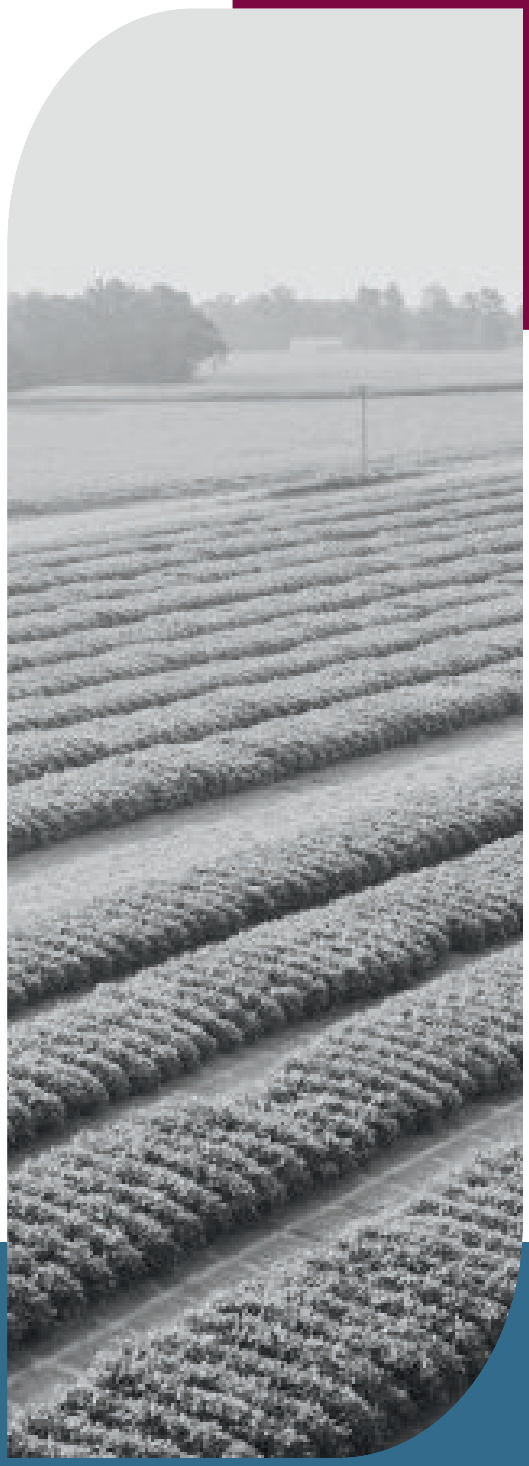
- Real-Time Access: Dashboards and live data support agile storytelling to stakeholders including funders, government partners, and the university.
- Integrated Modules: Planning, reporting, and future tools like Event Registration, Partnerships, and CRM streamline operations.
- Enhanced Evaluation: Specialists can track programming and use built-in tools for visual, meaningful data collection.

"PEARS speaks our language and empowers every level of our organization—from agents to directors—with actionable, visible data." - Christina Galardi, Data Integration Specialist.

Implementation Approach

To support the transition, VCE adopted a comprehensive change management strategy:

- Hired a Data Integration Specialist
- Developed tailored communications and training
- Formed an implementation team of agents and specialists
- Partnered with PEARS to deliver district-level workshops
- Conducted pre-post surveys to assess impact



Early Outcomes and Lessons Learned

VCE's rollout sparked a culture shift toward data-driven reflection and improvement. Key emerging practices include:

1. Improved Outcome Specificity: Feedback loops between leadership and program teams are refining the outcomes and indicators used in PEARS.
2. Streamlined Surveys: Teams are aligning surveys with PEARS' simple, effective formats.
3. Civil Rights Reporting Clarity: The transition is encouraging standardization and transparency around reporting requirements.

"Using PEARS is not just a technical shift—it's fueling deeper conversations about program development and evaluation." - Christina Galardi, Data Integration Specialist.

Looking Forward

While still early in implementation, VCE is seeing clear momentum. Individual and organizational shifts are taking root, with positive feedback across the board. The PEARS team's responsive support and the system's national community of users further reinforce VCE's confidence in the transition.

Christina Galardi, said VCE is excited *"to share our story and learn from others. PEARS is not just software—it's a partnership in growth."*

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