

UNDERSTANDING THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

Consider this three-step framework to help ensure programs, policies, and research are rural-relevant.

Health Care System

- Accessibility
- Availability
- Coverage
- Culturally and linguistically appropriate
- Health and insurance literacy
- Workforce



Infrastructure

- Broadband
- Distribution of funding from state and federal
- Economy
- Education
- Policy
- Poverty
- Social services



Population

- Culture
- Demographics
- History
- Mindset
- Social cohesion
- Traditions



Environment

- Built and natural environment
- Climate
- Exposure (air quality, etc.)
- Food access
- Geography
- Housing
- Safety
- Transportation



Community
Health Status



Step 1: Recognize the rural context within the scope of efforts

- Think about your health research, policy, or program initiative, what is the scope of your effort (e.g., national, regional, state, local) and what types of communities might be impacted (e.g., micropolitan, small towns, tribal, frontier)?
- Which definition are you using to determine rural designation of included communities (e.g., federal agency, state agency, funder)?
- What attributes can you discern about the culture (e.g., shared beliefs, history, lore, traditions) of the rural communities within the scope of your efforts?

Step 2: Consider the drivers of health equity when planning your efforts for long-term impact

- Which subgroup(s) is most affected by inequities and why (e.g., contextual and structural issues)?
 - If not clear, what data is needed to understand? Who else do you need to engage to understand why these inequities exist?
- Is the most affected subgroup(s) actively involved in your work?
 - How is the subgroup(s) represented in your decisions?
- Do your strategies intentionally address inequities?
 - Do you have the right data to see opportunities for impact on subgroup health outcomes?
- Could your strategies inadvertently create greater health inequity in the community?

Step 3: Assess the influence of key rural factors in planning your efforts

- Which factors are present?
- Interconnectivity: In what ways do these factors interact and how will these interactions play out over time?
- Unintended consequences: How might the change caused by the intervention affect other parts of the system?
- Time to impact: Will it take time to realize and understand the impact of the intervention?