

Six Principles for Measuring Rural Development Progress

Regards to Rural
April 20th, 2024

Community 
Strategies Group

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Field Development

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Measure Up: A Call to Action

Our Goal

To deepen conversations about ways for funders to design programs that consider lower-capacity communities' realities, needs, and goals.

Who Contributed

46 rural economic and community development practitioners from a diverse range of rural and Native nation communities.

Why Measurement is Important



A fundamental reassessment of how we measure rural development progress and who defines success



Funding pipelines from all sources will have far greater impact



There has to be mutual respect, and I think oftentimes communities value what funders bring to the table because of the connection to the financial resources that will come along with them. But that same respect isn't always given or shown by funders who walk into a space acknowledging the [local] work. . . If you don't demand that, it doesn't happen.



Felicia Lucky
*President, Black Belt
Community Foundation*



Health Equity & Measurement

Using a community's own understanding of identity and measurement of health is critical for equitably addressing health conditions and supporting community prosperity.

THRIVE RURAL FRAMEWORK

Rural Voice and Power

Equitable Aims and Design

Resources for Productive Action

Local-Level Building Blocks



Welcome All to the Community



Advance Personal Well-Being



Strengthen Local Ownership and Influence



Build from Current Assets



Balance Development Goals



Design for Everyone to Thrive



Prepare Action-Able Leadership



Organize an Action Infrastructure



Act as a Region



Build Momentum

Systems-Level Building Blocks



Rural Voice in Design and Action



Aligned Rural Fields and Actors



Accurate Rural Narrative



Balanced Development Outcomes



Cohesive Rural Policy Lens



Valued Rural Stewardship



Rural Stakeholder Equity



Ready Rural Capital Access and Flow



Rural Data for Analysis and Change



Regional Analysis and Action



The Foundational Element requires identifying and dismantling historical and ongoing discriminatory practices that disadvantage rural people and places based on place, race, & class.

1

Expand the range of individual and community assets used to indicate critical rural development progress.

There is a need for broader, more holistic sets of community and economic development progress measurements.

“

The data for Puna says that 78% of households are ALICE (AssetLimited, Income-Constrained while Employed) and in poverty. A woman from Puna told us, ‘We might be the worst when it comes to income, but we are the best when it comes to ‘ohana (family): None of us are making it on our own, and all of us are making it because of ‘ohana.’ The definition of wealth for Hawai‘i Island communities is very different from what’s being presented to us as a measure of success.

”



Janice Ikeda
*Executive Director,
Vibrant Hawai‘i*

2

Do not dictate what to measure. Work with rural initiatives to define the progress indicators that make local - and mutual - sense.

Extensive reporting requirements are time-consuming, extractive, and inhibit grantee effectiveness.

“

“It seems to me that in rural communities there may be a different quality of conversation about what matters, because of the strength and importance of our social network and our quality of life, more so than how much someone makes, or their status.



Ajulo Othow
*Founder and CEO,
EnerWealth Solutions*

”

3

Measure progress relative to the rural effort's starting point at its current stage of development - not against an ideal "success" standard.

More progress is made when communities are allowed to assess progress from their own starting points.

“

How you perceive is how you proceed. I believe this and I witness misperceptions about Native America all the time. These misperceptions limit our opportunities and we use a lot of resources to break down these misperceptions just to get to a starting point with funders.



Lakota Vogel
*Executive Director, Four Bands
Community Fund*

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Measure decreases in place, race, and class divides – and increases in the participation and decision-making that reduce these divides – as inherent elements of increasing rural prosperity.

Policy and investment designers should reach out to the “unreached rural” in every region, race, and class.



To us, rural is a culture, and when we define it as a culture and make it a topic around equity, I think it’s harder to marginalize rural people in rural places. [A] huge part is just ensuring that people understand who we are and that we have representation in those different buckets – to not only see our successes and see our wins, but to understand how to digest our data and make it a story that’s positive and not weaponize it against us.



Justin Archer Burch
*Washington County Economic Alliance and Delta Compass
President & CEO*



5

Identify, value, and measure effective collaboration as progress toward rural prosperity.

Collaboration must be built on trust, shared understanding and goals, broad participation and decision-making across stakeholders

“

[In rural America] nobody has the resources to go it alone. One of the things it takes to do better – that almost no funding streams are willing to pay for – is collaboration. They’re willing to pay for that particular project, but the glue that holds it all together is just probably the most difficult piece to find support for in rural communities.

”



John Molinaro
Principal,
RES Associates, LLC



Identify, value, and measure signals of local momentum as progress toward rural prosperity.

Youth engagement is a particularly good indicator of momentum - it increases young adults' belief that they can find a way to stay in the community.



Our native youth, of the ones I was able to survey on Cheyenne River, feel optimistic that they can do better than what their parents had access to. That is a direct reflection of how recently colonization happened to us. You can tell from your grandma going to [non-Native] boarding school that "I'm going to have a better access to education or better opportunity access than what my grandma did." I think that optimism from youth could be a good measurement of success in rural America.



Lakota Vogel
*Executive Director,
Four Bands Community Fund*





Thinking about your own work...

How are you currently measuring your success/impact/need?

Are there metrics missing from how you could be capturing impact/need/change?



**Pair up with someone at you table
you don't work with.**

Briefly share what you are current using to measure your success.

Share what things you might add or consider to you measurement.

What conversations might you need to have to make changes?



Share your takeaways with
each other at your table.

Join at
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Ask one person at the
table to type your
takeaways in Slido.



Each table report out 1 or 2 best ideas folks could take back to their work.

Community Strategies Group



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