

Rural Approaches to Improving Health: Implementing and Sustaining Local Solutions

Minnesota Rural Health Association
Duluth, MN

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The Walsh Center 
for Rural Health Analysis

NORC AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Social Determinants of Health

World Health Organization definition:

"the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness. These circumstances are in turn shaped by a wider set of forces: economics, social policies, and politics."

Health is local...



Social Determinants of Health



Source: CDC Healthy People 2020

RWJF Leveraging Partners and Assets to Improve Health and Equity Project Team

- NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis

National Health Partners

- National Rural Health Association
- National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health

Regional Partners

- Southwest Center for Health Innovation
- Louisiana Public Health Institute
- Maine Rural Health Research Center
- Wisconsin Office of Rural Health
- East Tennessee State University

Non-Health Partners

- National Association of Development Organizations
- National Association of Counties

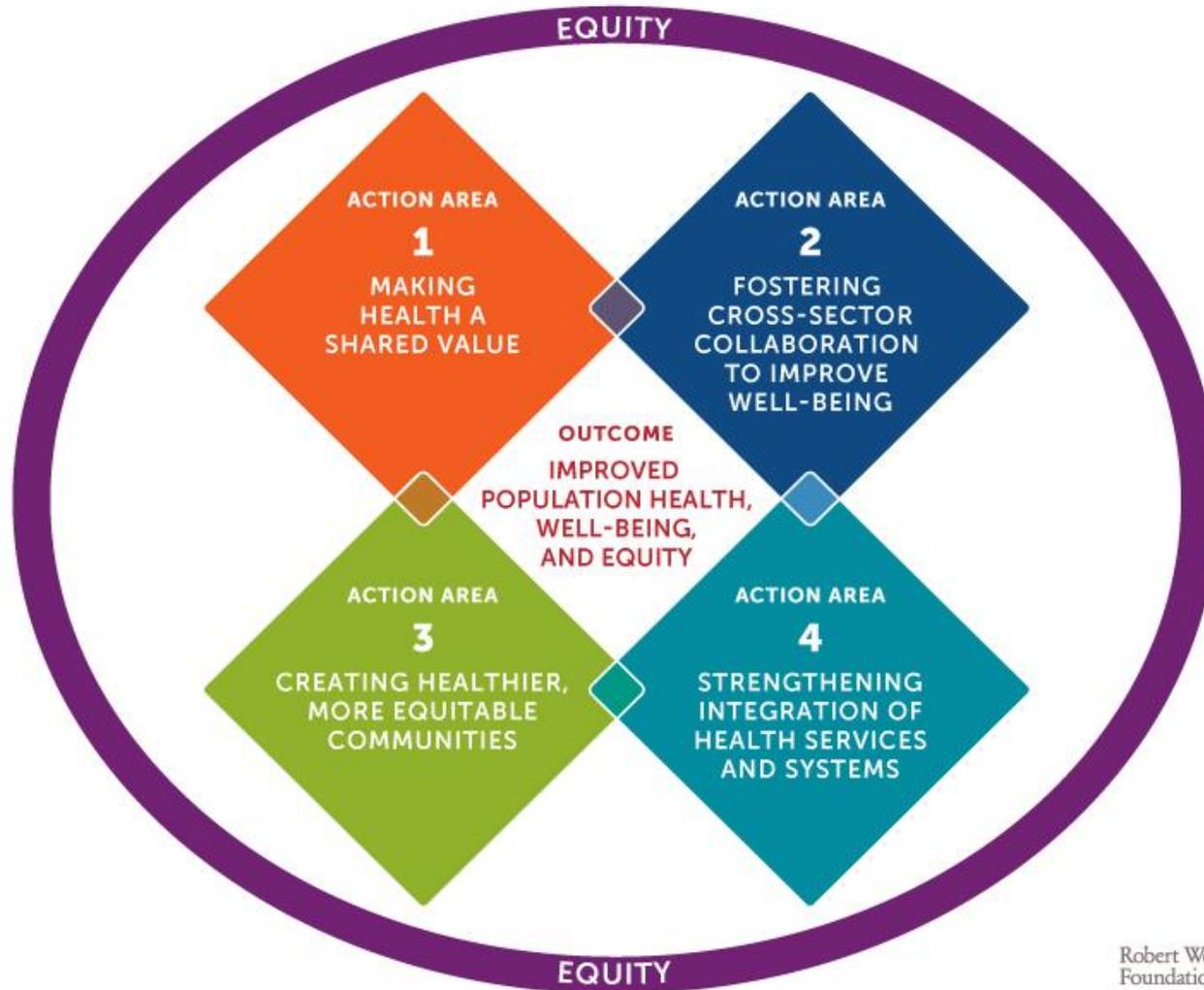
Consultant

- Melissa Schrift, Ph.D, Professor of Anthropology, East Tennessee State University

Project Purpose

- Conduct formative research to identify strengths, assets, and strategies that will accelerate and improve health and well-being in rural communities.
- Identify factors and partners that can influence health and well-being within rural communities, including why barriers have not been overcome in the past.
- Identify opportunities for action and a set of recommendations for diverse rural stakeholders and funders.

RWJF Culture of Health Action Framework



Research Questions

1. What **assets** can be leveraged to support health and equity in rural communities?
2. What **assets exist in different rural regions**?
 - What are the **similarities and differences** in assets across rural regions?
 - Are there **common assets**?
3. What **cultural factors** exist within and between rural regions that impact health and equity?
4. What types of **promising strategies** exist to leverage rural assets to improve health and equity?
5. How can **specific assets** such as culture or social cohesion accelerate improvements in health and equity?
6. Who are the **change agents**, champions, and partners in different rural sectors that can support a culture of health in rural communities?
7. Why have **challenges** not been overcome with respect to improving health and equity in rural communities?
8. What are the **opportunities for action** for RWJF and others to build on current work to leverage assets to improve health and equity? What are the **implications** of our findings?



Contextual Factors: *Political environment, policies, history*

Regional Community Forums



Forum #4: Upper Midwest

- Partner: Wisconsin Office of Rural Health
- 43 participants
- Sectors represented: healthcare, public health, education (university), cooperative extension, aging, philanthropy, youth, tribal nation
- Panelists: Members of the Jackson In Action coalition

Black River Falls, Wisconsin

- **Population: 3,622**
- **Jackson County population: 20,449 (2010 Census)**



Forum #4: Upper Midwest

- Health priorities: obesity, healthy eating/physical activity, opioids, alcohol use
- Strong focus on local public health

Assets

- Reliability and volunteerism are key assets among individuals.

Partners

- Relationships with multiple ethnic communities, including tribal and Amish communities
- Health department, local philanthropy, hospital, university

Recommendations

- Focus on capacity building, operational and indirect support
- Support a staff person to organize and coordinate community level action across all partners working towards common goals: *“Someone has to pay somebody to harness all this passion.”*

Cody, Nebraska

- <https://vimeo.com/136627286>

Cross-Site Reflections

- Common discussions related to social determinants of health, but priorities related to health behaviors and outcomes varied
 - Most sites discussed the need to address “root causes” in order to improve health and equity
- Many common assets, including social capital, relationships, and independence
 - Community members “wear many hats” in both professional and personal lives, and are strongly connected
 - Lack of resources can potentially fuel creativity and innovation
- Partners were similar across sites, but variation in “lead” partners and “non-traditional” partners
 - Hospitals, health departments and educational institutions are some of the main anchor institutions in rural communities
 - Examples of “non-traditional” partners included real estate agents, state alcohol trade associations, and juvenile probation

Cross-Site Reflections

- “Culture of Collaboration” across most sites
 - Collaboration and multi-sector approaches are already the norm in many rural communities
- Rural change agents take on several different roles – often, they are formal and/or informal leaders who have a passion to address an issue and leverage their resources for action.
- Even within rural areas, resources tend to be distributed to more densely populated areas, excluding the most remote.

Conetoe, North Carolina

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8lhNVMA42k>

What are the challenges to local success?



- Lack of tools and strategies
 - Evidence-base or promising practices
 - Systematic way to share and analyze data
- Resource and perspective differences between organizations
- Lack of effective multi-sector collaboration
- Lack of interoperable data systems

What makes successful local solutions sustainable?

- Leadership, leadership, leadership
 - Vision
 - Action
 - Community buy-in
- Establish effective multi-sector collaboration
- Engage multi-generations
- Build upon success
 - Share data to demonstrate outcomes



Your First Stop for Rural Health Information



Get Rural Updates



Sign-up to receive our weekly newsletter:

Funding Opportunities



Discover the latest funding and opportunities to support rural health. Browse all funding opportunities.

Am I Rural?



Use the Am I Rural? Tool to find out if a location is considered rural based on various definitions of rural, including definitions that are used as eligibility criteria for federal programs.

Key Rural Health Issues



Learn about issues that impact rural health in RHIhub's Topic Guides. Recently updated:

- Violence and Abuse in Rural America [KWJ](#)
- Browse all 50+ topics

Community Health Gateway



Find rural project examples in Rural Health Models and Innovations and proven strategies for strong rural programs with toolkits like the

Finding Statistics & Data



Learn how to locate and use data in the Finding Statistics and Data Related to Rural Health topic guide and this chart of Data Sources & Tools

RHIhub Toolkit

Rural Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse Toolkit
Our new toolkit provides resources and information that organizations can use to develop, implement, evaluate, and sustain substance abuse prevention and treatment programs. Includes evidence-based examples, promising models, and program best practices.



THE RURAL MONITOR

Feasting on Rural America: The Spread of Tick-Borne Diseases
This summer is predicted to be the worst tick season yet. This boost in tick population increases the risk of contracting the diseases they carry. To commemorate Lyme Disease Awareness Month, this article delves into how Lyme and other tick-borne diseases are affecting rural America and what is being done about it.



Photo credit: James Gathany, CDC Public Health Image Library



News Headlines

- A Conversation with Dave Pearson [Rural Health Leadership Radio](#)
- Rural Shoppers Face Slim Choices, Steep Premiums On Exchanges [Kaiser Health News](#)

[More News >](#)



New in the Online Library

- **MORE Care: Narrowing the Rural Interprofessional Oral Health Care Gap**
Source: [DentaQuest Institute](#)
- **Medical Barriers to Nursing Home Care for Rural Residents**
Source: [Source: University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center](#)
- **New Frontiers for Funding: An Introduction to Grantmaking in Rural Aging**

<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/community-health/toolkits>

Rural Community Health Toolkit



Start here for a guide to building rural community health programs to address any type of health issue. Learn how to identify community needs, find evidence-based models, plan and implement your program, evaluate results, and much more.

Access to Care for Rural People with Disabilities



Learn about approaches rural communities can use to improve access to care for people with disabilities.

Care Coordination Toolkit



Find models and program examples for delivering high-quality care across different rural healthcare settings.

Community Health Workers Toolkit



Learn about roles community health workers (CHWs) fill, as well as CHW training approaches.

Diabetes Prevention and Management Toolkit



Find resources and best practices to develop diabetes prevention and management programs in rural areas.

Health Networks and Coalitions Toolkit



Find resources and strategies to help create or expand a rural health network or coalition.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Toolkit



Learn about strategies and models for rural health promotion and disease prevention in the community, clinic, and workplace.

HIV/AIDS Prevention and Treatment Toolkit



Explore models and resources for implementing HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs in rural communities.

Obesity Prevention Toolkit



Find out how rural communities, schools, and healthcare providers can develop programs to help address obesity.

Oral Health Toolkit



Discover rural oral health approaches that focus on workforce, access, outreach, schools, and more.

Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse Toolkit



Learn about models and resources for developing substance abuse prevention and treatment programs in rural communities.

Services Integration Toolkit



Learn how rural communities can integrate health and human services to increase care coordination, improve health outcomes, and reduce healthcare costs.

- Research approaches to community health programs
- Discover what works and why
- Learn about common obstacles
- Connect with program experts
- Evaluate your program to show impact

These toolkits are made available through the NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis and the University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center in collaboration with the Rural Health Information Hub. Funding is provided by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), Health Resources and Services Administration.

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Thank You!

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