

# GUIDE TO USING THE RURAL LENS



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What do **YOU** see  
WHEN YOU LOOK THROUGH THE  
**RURAL LENS?**

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# WHAT IS THE RURAL LENS?

It's an element of the Canadian Rural Partnership, a tool to help you factor the needs of rural and remote Canadians into new policies, programs, and regulations.

## WHY SHOULD YOU USE THE RURAL LENS?

- To strengthen your initiative by ensuring that **all** Canadians and the communities they live in—rural, remote and urban—benefit.
- To help the government deliver on its commitment to improve the quality of life in rural and remote Canada, as outlined in the 1997, 1999 and 2001 Speeches from the Throne.
- To strengthen your Minister's contribution to the Annual Report to Parliament on Rural Canada (coordinated by the Rural Secretariat).
- To maximize the opportunity to make good public policy by testing its impact on rural and remote Canada right at the start, thus reducing the likelihood of making modifications at the end of the development process to include rural and remote considerations.

## HOW TO USE THE GUIDE:

The Guide has been divided into two sections: **"What stage are you at"**, and **"How to use the Rural Lens"**. On the left page, you have the description of the stage of development and questions to consider. On the right you have corresponding templates to fill in, questions to answer, or examples to follow.

### 1. DETERMINE AND LOCATE THE STAGE YOU'RE AT.

The 10 stages we've included here are:

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### 2. CONSIDER THE STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS, AND

### 3. FILL IN THE TEMPLATES AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS TO COMPLETE THE STAGE.

Depending on the nature of your initiative, you may want to do a number of stages at the same time. We encourage you to photocopy the templates for each of your new initiatives. And we can help by guiding you through the stages.

## WHAT DOES “RURAL” MEAN?

Rural means different things to different people. It includes small towns, villages and hamlets—by that yardstick, 90% of Canada is rural or remote—and up to 30% of Canada’s population is spread out over this 90% of the land.

### LOCATION

There are rural communities all across the country and remote communities in the northern or coastal areas of most provinces and in all of the territories.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL AND REMOTE CANADA

- longer distances to services (health/medical, school, financial)
- less access to transportation and fewer alternative means of transportation available
- access by rural routes, ice roads, or by air or water only
- limited access to telecommunications infrastructure, telephones or Internet
- dependence on primary resource industries (e.g. forestry, fishing, mining, agriculture)
- clean air, open spaces, vast forests and lakes, tundra
- a way of life, with unique traditions/culture and a specific social structure
- the North is rich in natural resources and has an austere climate, little vegetation, permafrost, fewer hours of daylight, higher price index for tax exemptions

#### DEFINITIONS OF RURAL:

There is no one definition of rural that is used consistently by all levels of government. The one used most often by federal departments is the Rural and Small Town Canada definition. The OECD and the Census of Population definitions include the concept of density of population.

#### RURAL AND SMALL TOWN CANADA DEFINITION:

population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (100,000+ and 50% or more of neighbouring municipalities commute to urban core) and outside Census Agglomerations (10,000-99,000 and 50% or more of neighbouring municipalities commute to urban core).  
(1996 rural and small town population = 22%)

#### OECD DEFINITION:

- predominantly rural: over 50% population living in rural communities
  - intermediate: from 15 to 49% population living in rural communities
  - predominantly urban: less than 15% population living in rural communities (where a rural community has less than 150 persons per km<sup>2</sup>)
- (1996 population in predominantly rural regions = 31%)

**CENSUS OF POPULATION DEFINITION:** communities of less than 1,000 people and areas with a population density of less than 400 persons per km<sup>2</sup>.  
(1996 rural population of Canada = 22%)

**DEFINITION OF REMOTE:** This is a working definition, as there is no one definition that is used by all levels of government. It is based on the Geography Working Paper No. 2000-3, Geography Division, Statistics Canada (January 2000).

**Remote:** area that is sparsely populated, at a great distance from, and with little to no influence from urban/business centres. Remote communities are characterized by their geographic location, degree of economic activity (generally moderate to low), physical attributes and accessibility issues and challenges (for services, goods and transportation).



## THE GOVERNMENT'S VISION FOR RURAL CANADA

The Government of Canada is committed to a rural Canada with:

- Vibrant communities and a sustainable resource base contributing to our national identity and prosperity.
- Citizens making informed decisions about their own future.
- Canadians sharing the benefits of the global knowledge-based economy and society, and taking full advantage of opportunities to develop sustainable communities and personal skills.

## PRIORITIES

Rural Canadians have identified the following areas for focused attention:

- Access to federal government programs and services;
- Access to financial resources for rural business and community development;
- Programs and services for rural and Aboriginal youth;
- Rural community capacity building, leadership and skills development;
- Infrastructure for community development;
- Skills and technology to participate in the knowledge-based economy;
- Economic diversification in rural Canada through more targeted assistance;
- Access to health care at reasonable cost;
- Access to education at reasonable cost;
- Strategic partnerships to facilitate rural community development; and
- Promoting rural Canada as a place to live, work and raise a family.

The **Vision** and **Priorities** were developed during the Rural Dialogue process – a discussion between the federal government and rural and remote Canadians. They are part of the **Federal Framework for Action in Rural Canada**.

## STAGE 1 Concept

Define the initiative (program, policy, legislation).

## STAGE 2 Environmental Scan and Impact Assessment

You're generating great ideas that will benefit Canadians. This section is intended to help you think through how your initiative fits in the "big picture" of government-wide priorities, in particular, rural ones. If you wish to conduct consultations at this stage, see Stage Six for more detailed guidelines.

- Examine recent Throne Speeches and Budgets, government priorities, horizontal connections with other federal government priorities, public demand/appetite, stakeholder support, and legal jurisdiction. The impact may well be the same for rural, remote and urban areas, or a beneficial impact to one may also be beneficial to another. On the other hand, a disproportionately negative impact on rural or remote regions should cause you to reconsider what is proposed. Will it stand the test of good public policy?
- Check with other departments (e.g. on their Internet site, Parliamentary committees' sites) for consultations that may have taken place (rural and remote, as well as urban).
- Undertake studies or research, as necessary, on issues relevant to your initiative as it relates to rural Canada, in order to develop a solid background and foundation for the initiative (e.g. check the Policy Research site for information and sources: [policyresearch.schoolnet.ca](http://policyresearch.schoolnet.ca)). Check, for example, with appropriate women's directorates or diversity experts to consider any unintended impacts on the various sub-groups in the rural and remote or urban communities.
- Consult with the Rural Secretariat for potential rural impacts (613-759-7112, [www.rural.gc.ca](http://www.rural.gc.ca)).

### CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- > How is this initiative relevant to rural and/or remote Canada?
- > Is the impact specific to a selected rural/remote environment or region?
- > What is the potential financial/economic impact on rural and remote regions?
- > What is the potential social impact on rural and remote regions?
- > What is the potential environmental impact on rural and remote regions?
- > What is the potential cultural impact on rural and remote regions?
- > How can the effects on rural and remote regions be measured?
- > How is the initiative consistent with government priorities, with government commitments to rural and remote Canada, and to other sub-groups in rural and remote Canada?
- > Will the impact of this initiative vary for specific groups (such as men, women, youth, seniors, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents) in rural and remote Canada?
- > Is sustainability (i.e. the convergence of economic, social and environmental factors) being considered?



STAGE 1 Concept

What is the title of your initiative? What is its objective?

Examples of possible initiatives: a capacity-building **program** for rural communities; a **policy** on taxes for small and medium-sized enterprises; **legislation** on endangered species.

STAGE 2 Environmental Scan and Impact Assessment

In the table, describe briefly the impact of the initiative on people and resources in rural, remote and urban areas. You may wish to add sub-columns for specific groups.

Question	Rural	Remote	Urban
Relevance to rural and remote			
Relevance to specific region			
Economic impact on rural and remote			
Social impact on rural and remote			
Environmental impact on rural and remote			
Cultural impact on rural and remote			
Measurement of effects			

EXAMPLES OF CONSULTATIONS/RESEARCH:

- > The *Rural Dialogue* and the *National Rural Conference*, sponsored by the Canadian Rural Partnership ([www.rural.gc.ca](http://www.rural.gc.ca))
- > Environment Canada’s *Healthy Neighbourhoods* ([www.ec.gc.ca/ecoaction/choices/e\\_index.htm](http://www.ec.gc.ca/ecoaction/choices/e_index.htm)) Health Canada’s *Building Healthy Communities* and *First Nations and Inuit Health Programs* ([www.hc-sc.gc.ca/msb/fnihp/stats\\_e.htm](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/msb/fnihp/stats_e.htm))
- > Research conducted by the voluntary and non-governmental sectors
- > Statistics Canada’s *Rural and Small Town Canada* analysis bulletins, available at [www.statcan.ca:80/english/freepub/21-006-XIE/free.htm](http://www.statcan.ca:80/english/freepub/21-006-XIE/free.htm)
- > Farm Women’s Bureau Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Women and Rural Economic Development (WRED), diversity committees in your department

## STAGE 3 People and Organizations Involved

Identify who needs to be involved and/or consulted, according to the impact the initiative will have. List the people (clients, stakeholders, partners), program delivery organizations, and resources (land, water, air; infrastructure, such as highways) in three columns: rural, remote and urban. *Some may fit in more than one column.*

## STAGE 4 Development and Design

Develop the program, policy, legislation. Try to design it to factor in the needs of rural and remote Canadians, using the following questions as a guide.

- Is the initiative designed to respond to any of the priorities identified by rural Canadians (See Priorities, page 3)? Does it support the Federal Framework for Action in Rural Canada?
- How will this initiative advance the federal government's vision for rural Canada? (See Vision, page 3)
- Does this initiative conflict with the priorities and vision for rural Canada? If so, how will this conflict be resolved?
- Is the benefit to rural Canadians maximized through such methods as co-operation with other partners?
- Will the program be equally accessible to rural and remote Canadians as well as urban Canadians?
- Will the impact be equitable in all parts of the country or will there be a disproportionate impact on rural Canada? How will a negative impact be prevented or mitigated?
- Will the outcomes be measured? Which performance indicator(s) might be used to monitor the success/failure of this initiative?
- Will your policy or legislation be applicable in the same way to rural or remote as to urban Canadians and their communities? If not, how is its application different? Does the policy or legislation need to be modified for it to be beneficial to rural and remote Canadians?



STAGE

3

People and Organizations Involved

Who is involved?

Rural	Remote	Urban
e.g. Health Canada (Office of Rural Health)	e.g. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada	e.g. Health Canada
e.g. small and medium- sized enterprises	e.g. small and medium- sized enterprises	e.g. small and medium- sized enterprises

In order to build a list of possible constituents (whom to consult), you can view lists and directories of rural associations and organizations at [www.agr.ca/cris/dir\\_e.html](http://www.agr.ca/cris/dir_e.html).

STAGE

4

Development and Design

Issues to consider when determining how to accommodate rural realities in the delivery of programs/services:

- Are the proposed delivery vehicles/instruments appropriate for rural Canada?
- Has clustering/single window/co-location been considered?
- Has alternative service delivery been considered?
- Could the program be delivered by community-based organizations closest to the client?
- Does it allow for regional variation?
- Does it allow for decision-making at the local level?
- Is it accessible to rural and remote Canadians? For example, access issues for rural areas include a limited telecommunications infrastructure, lack of speed and bandwidth, and long-distance charges, resulting in the need to provide a choice among in-person, telephone and/or Internet services.
- What are the sectoral or jurisdictional linkages/implications, if any?



## STAGE 5 Communications

It is as important for federal communicators to use the Rural Lens in developing communications plans and products, as it is for policy analysts to use it in developing policies and programs. By using the Rural Lens, communicators will ensure that:

- rural Canadians are able to learn about the different initiatives of the federal government, and
- rural Canadians can see that their specific concerns have been recognized in the design of the initiative.

## STAGE 6 Validation and Consultations

This stage complements the work done under Stage Two. If you have not undertaken consultations, this is a good point at which to do them.

- Undertake or locate and analyze the results of consultations with the people and organizations identified in Stage Three.
- Undertake or locate and analyze the results of relevant studies and research identified in Stage Two. Include other federal organizations, Central Agencies and/or Cabinet in the consultations to ensure that you co-ordinate horizontally across the federal government and obtain advice and guidance from senior officials and ministers, as needed.
- Validate the impact assessments made in Stage Two.
- Use feedback from any focus groups on communications messaging and products in Stage Five.



# STAGE 5 Communications

- Use appropriate media to reach diverse rural and remote audiences, and to accommodate varying degrees of knowledge, literacy, or the use of a first language other than French or English.
- Radio and weekly newspapers reach many people in rural and remote Canada. You could also consider posting information at government locations in small towns (e.g. the Post Office, Service Canada Centres, CAP sites).
- The 1 800 O Canada toll-free line and the Canada Site ([www.canada.gc.ca](http://www.canada.gc.ca)) can be used to advertise new programs and services. (Call Public Works and Government Services Canada at 613-998-0036 for a copy of the guidelines.)
- Cable TV, Internet and national newspapers are less appropriate, because they have a more limited reach in rural than in urban Canada. Using a variety of media ensures that everyone has an equal opportunity to get the message.
- Products and messages should be focus-tested with rural/remote as well as urban audiences.
- Download specific messages highlighting the government’s commitment to rural Canada from [publiservice.gc.ca/services/infonet/modules/agriculture/mod015\\_e.html](http://publiservice.gc.ca/services/infonet/modules/agriculture/mod015_e.html)

# STAGE 6 Validation and Consultations

Who is involved? With whom do we consult and in what order?

Rural	Remote	Urban
e.g. Health Canada (Office of Rural Health)	e.g. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada	e.g. Health Canada
e.g. small and medium-sized enterprises	e.g. small and medium-sized enterprises	e.g. small and medium-sized enterprises

List the concerns separately by rural, remote and urban (some may fit more than one column).

Rural	Remote	Urban
e.g. Access to health care	e.g. Access to health care	e.g. Access to health care
e.g. Access to micro-financing/capital	e.g. Targeted opportunities for youth	e.g. Access to micro-financing/capital



## STAGE 7 Refine Initiative and Identify Resources

Refine the details of the initiative to take results of consultations into account (recognizing that not all concerns raised during consultations may be addressed by this one initiative) and tailor the initiative to meet the needs of rural, remote and urban Canadians.

Identify sources of funds, human resources and partnerships.

## STAGE 8 Approval

Present initiative to deputy minister(s), minister(s), Cabinet, Treasury Board, to seek approval (in the case of legislation, approval before being tabled in the House of Commons).

## STAGE 9 Deliver Program

Implement the program or service. If the new initiative is legislation, it would be forwarded to Parliament for debate at this stage.

## STAGE 10 Monitor and Evaluate Program

Include performance indicators for your organization and the cross-government indicators such as those being developed for the federal rural file. Then you will be able to answer the question: how has this initiative affected rural Canada?



## STAGE 7 Refine Initiative and Identify Resources

- Consult with federal officials, including the Rural Secretariat, to ensure horizontal co-ordination with other initiatives.
- Ensure that as many as possible, if not all of the concerns outlined in Stage Six are addressed in some manner, especially to ensure equitable treatment of rural, remote and urban communities (i.e. ensure that none suffer a disproportionately negative impact).

## STAGE 8 Approval

Include briefing material which indicates how the initiative fits into the Federal Framework for Action in Rural Canada and how it delivers on government commitments to rural Canada.

## STAGE 9 Deliver Program

There may be different delivery mechanisms for rural, remote and urban areas. This would be built in during the design stage.

## STAGE 10 Monitor and Evaluate Program

- Evaluation plan includes assessment of performance against relevant rural performance indicators (contact the Rural Secretariat at 613-759-7112 or at [rs@em.agr.ca](mailto:rs@em.agr.ca)).
- Include initiatives in the Annual Report to Parliament on Rural Canada (view Report at [www.rural.gc.ca/annualreport/index\\_e.html](http://www.rural.gc.ca/annualreport/index_e.html)).



This workbook is also available on our web site ([www.rural.gc.ca](http://www.rural.gc.ca)). Its companion piece, the Checklist of Rural Considerations, is available on this site ([www.rural.gc.ca/checklist\\_e.html](http://www.rural.gc.ca/checklist_e.html)). For more information on the Canadian Rural Partnership and the Rural Secretariat, please visit our web site or contact us at the address below.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

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